

Cyclades Κυκλάδες



The Cyclades (kih-*klah*-dez), are Greek islands to dream about; sun-kissed outliers of rock and dappled earth lying scattered across the glittering Aegean Sea. Their characteristic white cubist houses, golden beaches, olive groves, pine forests, herb-strewn mountain slopes and terraced valleys make for an irresistible mix. Throw in a dash of hedonism, and a culture that draws vividly on ancient and modern themes, and the Greek Island dream can become reality.

Other realities can be a touch more down to earth, at least for native islanders, who have often struggled for a living through centuries of deprivation. Beneath the tourism gloss, many still raise livestock and grow food on reluctant soil, or chase a diminishing supply of fish from seas that are regularly rough and dangerous. Winters are often grey, bleak and unforgiving.

The Cyclades range from big fertile Naxos, with its craggy mountains and landlocked valleys, to the tiny outliers of Donousa, Iraklia and Anafi, where the sea dominates, with attitude, on every side.

The beaches of Mykonos, Santorini and Ios are awash with sun-lounger society and raucous diversions; their main towns seethe with commercialism. All of this has its appeal, but other islands, such as Andros, Amorgos and Sifnos, have kept tourism to a more sedate scale.

The Cyclades are so named because they form a *kyklos* (circle) around the island of Delos, one of the world's most haunting ancient sites. Closing that circle is still one of the most rewarding experiences for the dedicated traveller.

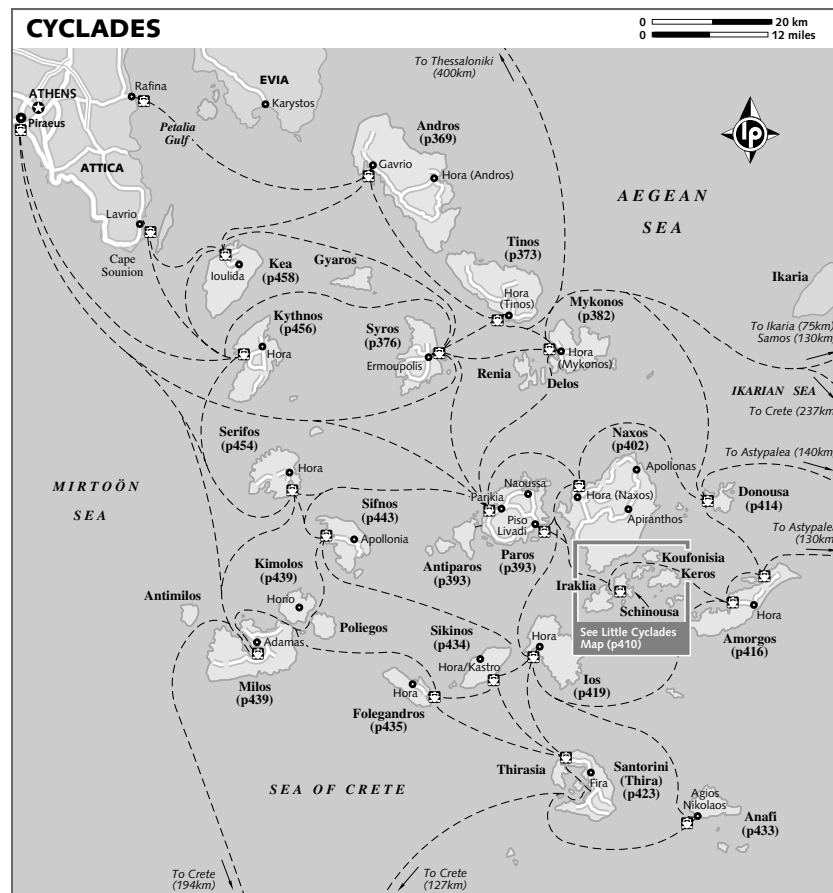
HIGHLIGHTS

- **Timeless Greece** Exploring the historic old *kastros* (original settlements crowned by a ruined castle) of Sikinos (p433) and Serifos (p455)
- **Spectacular Sunsets** Viewing the best over Santorini's submerged volcano (p422)
- **Ancient & Sublime** Indulging in Delos' (p392) archaeological feast
- **Secluded Sand** Hiding away on the islands of the Little Cyclades (p410) and on the east coast of Andros (p368)
- **High Flying** Kiteboarding on Paros (p399)
- **Dawn Patrol** Clubbing on Mykonos (p381) and Ios (p418)



■ POPULATION: 109,814

■ AREA: 2429 SQ KM



HISTORY

The Cyclades are said to have been inhabited since at least 7000 BC. Around 3000 BC there emerged a cohesive Cycladic civilisation that was bound together by seagoing commerce and exchange. During the Early Cycladic period (3000–2000 BC) the tiny but distinctive Cycladic marble figurines, mainly stylized representations of the naked female form, were sculpted.

In the Middle Cycladic period (2000–1500 BC) many of the islands were occupied by the Minoans – at Akrotiri, on Santorini, a Minoan town has been excavated. At the beginning of the Late Cycladic period (1500–1100 BC) the Cyclades passed to the Mycenaeans. The Dorians followed in the 8th century BC, bringing Archaic culture with them.

By the middle of the 5th century BC the islands were members of a fully fledged Athenian empire. In the Hellenistic era (323–146 BC) they were controlled by Egypt's Ptolemaic dynasties and then by the Macedonians. In 146 BC the islands became a Roman province, and lucrative trade links were established with many parts of the Mediterranean.

The division of the Roman Empire in AD 395 resulted in the Cyclades being ruled from Byzantium (Constantinople), but after the fall of Byzantium in 1204, they came under a Venetian governance that doled out the islands to opportunistic aristocrats. The most powerful of these was Marco Sanudo (self-styled Venetian Duke of Naxos), who acquired

Naxos, Paros, Ios, Santorini, Anafi, Sifnos, Milos, Amorgos and Folegandros, introducing a Venetian gloss that survives to this day in island architecture.

The Cyclades came under Turkish rule in 1537. Neglected by the Ottomans, they became backwaters prone to pirate raids, hence the frequent relocation of coastal settlements to inland hilltop sites. The effect of repeated raids, however, led to wholesale depopulation of the islands. In 1563 only five islands were still inhabited.

The Cyclades' part in the Greek War of Independence was minimal, but they became havens for people fleeing from other islands where insurrections against the Turks had led to massacres and persecution. During WWII the islands were occupied by the Italians, and entered the 1950s demoralised and deprived. Many islanders lived in deep poverty; many more gave up the economic battle and headed for the mainland, or to America and Australia, in search of work.

The fortunes of the Cyclades were revived by the tourism boom that began way back in the 1970s, although some would argue that tourism has created a few 'dormitory' islands that are all but empty of people during the winter months. New economic developments include sometimes contentious port and marina extensions and plans for huge wind farms, although tourism seems likely to be the mainstay of life on these much-loved and indeed very lovely islands.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Olympic Airlines (www.olympicairlines.com) has flights between Athens and Naxos, Syros, Santorini, Mykonos, Paros and Milos. From Mykonos there are flights to/from Thessaloniki, Santorini and Rhodes (see individual island sections for details).

Aegean Airlines (www.aegeanair.com) flies to Mykonos and Santorini from Athens and Thessaloniki.

Sky Express (☎ 28102 23500; www.skyexpress.gr) flies to Santorini from Athens and on from Santorini to Rhodes.

Until suspension of operations in July of 2007, the innovative **AirSea Lines** (www.airsealines.com) ran seaplane flights daily from Thursday to Monday between Lavrio (in southern Attica) and Mykonos, Paros, Ios and Santorini. It also ran flights daily from Thursday to

Monday between Mykonos and Kalymnos and Kos (both in the Dodecanese).

Due to upgrading requirements the company suspended its Aegean schedule in July 2007. The schedule was still suspended at the time of writing (September 2007). The company states, however, that it will resume its Aegean service as soon as possible and readers are advised to check the company website.

Fast Boat & Catamaran

Large high-speed boats and catamarans are a regular feature on Cyclades' routes, mainly during the late spring to early autumn period. Their travel times are usually half those of regular ferries. Seats fill fast in July and August, especially on weekends, so it's worth booking your ticket a day or so in advance. For some travellers, the downside to using the smaller fast ferries is often the need to book well ahead; the regimented seat allocations; the absence of deck space; the limited view and the possible queasiness from being on these ferries, the result of rough sea conditions and the inescapable company of fellow sufferers. High speed certainly, but when there's a swell, there also can be an element of high roll.

Ferry

Ferry routes separate the Cyclades into western, northern, central and eastern subgroups.

Most ferry services operating within the Cyclades connect one of these subgroups with the ports of Piraeus, Lavrio or Rafina on the mainland. The central Cyclades (Paros, Naxos, Ios and Santorini) are the most visited and have the best ferry links with the mainland, usually to Piraeus.

The northern Cyclades (Andros, Tinos, Syros and Mykonos) have excellent connections with the mainland. The mainland port for Andros is Rafina, but it's possible to reach Andros from Piraeus by catching a ferry to Syros, Tinos or Mykonos and connecting from there.

Lavrio is the mainland port for ferries serving Kea, from where connections south to the other western Cyclades are not good. Kythnos has a reasonable number of connections to Piraeus and good connections south to other islands. Milos, Serifos and Sifnos have seen greatly improved ferry connections with Piraeus in recent years. Folegandros and

FERRY CONNECTIONS TO THE CYCLADES

Origin	Destination	Duration	Fare	Frequency
Agios Nikolaos (Crete)	Milos	7hr	€20.60	2 weekly
Iraklio (Crete)	Mykonos	9hr	€23.90	3 weekly
	Naxos	7½hr	€20.40	weekly
	Paros	7-8hr	€23.50	2 weekly
	Santorini	3¾hr	€15.10	3 weekly
Lavrio	Kea	1¼hr	€5.90	2 daily
	Kythnos	2½hr	€8.20	6 weekly
	Syros	3½hr	€14.30	2 weekly
Piraeus	Amorgos	10hr	€27.50	10 weekly
	Anafi	11hr	€27.10	3 weekly
	Donousa	7hr	€27.50	3 weekly
Piraeus	Folegandros	6-9hr	€26	4 weekly
	Ios	7hr	€27.10	4 daily
	Iraklia	6¾hr	€27.50	3 weekly
	Kimolos	6hr	€23	2 weekly
	Koufonisia	8hr	€27.30	5 weekly
	Kythnos	2½hr	€12.50	2 daily
	Milos	5-7hr	€25	2 daily
	Mykonos	6hr	€24.50	3 daily
	Naxos	6hr	€29	6 daily
	Paros	5hr	€28.80	6 daily
	Santorini	9hr	€31	4 daily
	Serifos	4½hr	€20	daily
	Sifnos	5hr	€24	daily
	Sikinos	10hr	€26.10	7 weekly
	Syros	4hr	€24	3 daily
	Tinos	5¼hr	€26	2 daily
Rafina	Andros	2hr	€10.90	3 daily
	Mykonos	4½hr	€19	2 daily
	Tinos	3½hr	€17.50	4 daily
Sitia (Crete)	Milos	10hr	€22	3 weekly
Thessaloniki	Mykonos	15hr	€37.30	3 weekly
	Naxos	18hr	€36.30	weekly
	Paros	16hr	€39.50	2 weekly
	Santorini	25hr	€41.10	3 weekly
	Syros	15hr	€35.20	weekly
	Tinos	18hr	€37.10	2 weekly

Sikinos have less frequent connections with the mainland.

The eastern Cyclades (Anafi, Amorgos, Iraklia, Schinoussa, Koufonisia and Donousa) are the least visited and have the fewest ferry links with the mainland. However, for the foreseeable future Blue Star Ferries is running a regular service to Amorgos, Iraklia, Schinoussa, Koufonisia and Donousa. These islands also have a daily service in summer to and from Naxos. Anafi is best reached from Santorini.

When planning your island-hopping it pays to bear this pattern of ferry routes in mind; however, Paros is the ferry hub of

the Cyclades, and connections between different groups are usually possible via this port.

See the table (above) for an overview of high-season ferry services to the Cyclades from the mainland and Crete. The information relates to slower, traditional ferries.

GETTING AROUND

For information on travel within the Cyclades, see the individual island entries.

The Cyclades are more exposed to the summer *meltemi* (northeasterly wind) than other island groups. This is a fierce wind; it may be warm, but it can blast, and it often plays havoc

with ferry schedules (especially for smaller vessels that ply the Little Cyclades routes, and for small hydrofoils). Keep this in mind if you're on a tight schedule.

ANDROS ΑΝΔΡΟΣ

pop 10,112

Big, beautiful Andros is a mere two hours by ferry from mainland Rafina and is a rewarding escape for those who want a less-tourist-logged Cycladic world. It's the most northerly island of the Cyclades and is the second largest after Naxos.

Satisfyingly remote in places, Andros boasts neoclassical mansions and Venetian tower-houses that contrast with the rough unpainted stonework of farm buildings and patterned dovescotes. Handsome stone walls, made up of a unique pattern of irregular slabs and smaller stones, lock the sometimes friable hill slopes in place. A network of footpaths, many of them stepped and cobbled, are also maintained, and the island has a fascinating archaeological and cultural heritage.

Andros has several beaches, many of them in out-of-the-way locations. There are three main settlements: the unpretentious port of Gavrio, the cheerful resort of Batsi and the handsome main town of Hora, known also as Andros.

Getting There & Away FERRY

At least three ferries daily leave Andros' main port of Gavrio for Rafina (€10.90 to 12.50, two hours). Daily ferries run to Tinos (€8, 1½ hours) and Mykonos (€10.50, 2½ hours), from where there are daily connections to Syros and Paros in high season. Services run direct to Syros, from May to October, three times a week (€9, two hours). On Saturday from May to September, a very slow ferry runs to Paros (€12.10, seven hours), Naxos (€12.20, eight hours and 20 minutes), Ios (€18.20, 12 hours) and Santorini (€20.80, 14¼ hours). This ferry continues to Anafi (€26.30, 16 hours), Sikinos (€18.20, 12 hours) and Folegandros (€18.20, 11 hours). On Thursday from May to September, a ferry runs to Kythnos (€11.70, six hours and 45 minutes) and Kea (€8, 8½ hours).

Getting Around

Nine buses daily (fewer on weekends) link Gavrio and Hora (€3.50, 55 minutes) via Batsi (€2, 15 minutes). Schedules are posted at the bus stops in Gavrio and Hora; otherwise, call ☎ 22820 22316 for information.

A **taxi** (☎ Gavrio 22820 71171, Batsi 22820 41081, Hora 22820 22171) from Gavrio to Batsi costs €8 and to Hora €25. Car hire is about €35 in August, and about €25 in the low season. **Euro Rent A Car** (☎ 22820 72440) is a friendly service with an office opposite the Gavrio ferry quay.

GAVRIO ΓΑΥΠΙΟ

Located on the west coast, Gavrio is the main port of Andros. Apart from the flurry of ferry arrivals it is very low key and a touch drab.

Orientation & Information

The ferry quay is situated midway along the waterfront and the bus stop is in front of it. The post office is 150m to the left as you leave the ferry quay. There's an ATM outside Kyklades Travel and there's a bank with ATM on the middle of the waterfront.

Kyklades Travel (☎ 22820 72363; lasia@otenet.gr)

A helpful office right opposite the ferry quay. It sells ferry tickets and can arrange accommodation.

Port police (☎ 22820 71213) On the waterfront.

Sleeping & Eating

Most visitors head for Batsi or Hora for accommodation. There are a couple of sleeping options on the Gavrio waterfront but these are essentially a last resort. A much better bet is **Ostria Studios** (☎ 22820 71551; www.ostria-studios.gr; s/d/apt €60/65/85; P ♿), about 300m along the Batsi road and with spacious rooms in a pleasant complex of rising terraces.

Peppering Gavrio's waterfront are several cafés and bars that are down-to-earth local places and weekend hang-outs for visiting mainlanders. **To Konaki** (☎ 22820 71733; mains €3.50-9) offers a healthy choice of fish, meat and vegetarian dishes with a local flavour. It's about 50m to the left of the ferry quay.

BATSI ΜΙΑΤΣΙ

Easy-going yet upbeat, Batsi is the island's main resort. Things are likely to liven up here with the completion of a yacht marina scheduled for 2008. The resort lies 7km south of Gavrio on the inner curve of a handsome bay. A sandy beach on the north side merges eventually with a harbour-side

promenade backed by a colourful swath of cafés, tavernas and shops. There's a dusty car park across the road from the beach. **Greek Sun Holidays** (☎ 22820 41198; greeksun@travelling.gr), located towards the far end of the waterfront, is a good source of information and can help with accommodation, car rental and ferry tickets. Scooters can be hired for €16 to €22 per day from **Dino's Rent-a-Bike** (☎ 22820 42169) by the car park.

Well-maintained self-drive boats can be hired from **Riva Boats** (☎ 22820 24412, 6974460330; Hora). They carry four adults comfortably. A minimum rental of one day is about €90 (see Sights & Activities, p371).

The tiny post office is tucked away beside the taverna opposite the bus stop. The

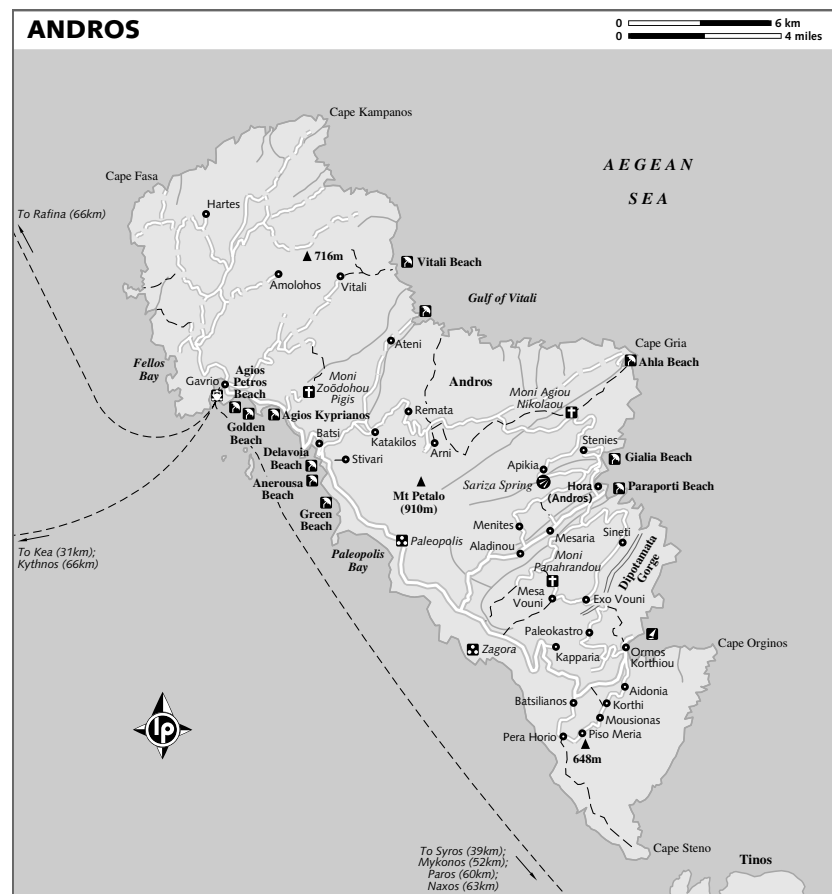
taxi rank, and National and Alpha banks (with ATMs), are all on the middle of the waterfront.

Tours

From May to October **Greek Sun Holidays** (☎ 22820 41198; greeksun@travelling.gr) organises island tours (€22) that take in Paleopolis and some of the island's loveliest villages. There are also small-group half- or full-day guided walks (€18 to €28) following old paths through beautiful countryside.

Sleeping & Eating

It's wise to book accommodation well ahead for July and August and for weekends in June and September.



Cavo D'ora Pension (☎ 22820 41766; s/d €25/45)

Located above a snack bar and pizzeria, the handful of pleasant rooms here offer outstanding value. You can get breakfast for €5.50 and tasty mezedhes and pizzas for €4.50 to €8. It's at the tree-shaded entrance to town, just across from the beach.

Likio Studios (☎ 22820 41050; www.likiostudios.gr; s/d/ apt €60/75/120; P) ☎ Peaceful flower-filled surroundings and a friendly welcome make these family-run, spacious and well-equipped studios a great choice. The studios are open year round, have central heating and are located about 100m inland from Dino's Rent-a-Bike.

Oti Kalo (☎ 22820 41287; mains €4.50-9) The name means 'everything good', and it's no idle boast. Mother's in the kitchen and she prepares an excellent version of the Andros speciality *froulalia* (spicy sausage and potato omelette), in big (€20) or small (€17), but even the small is more than enough for two. Tasty starters include mussels, while other mains include meat and fish as well as pasta.

Koala (☎ 22820 41696; mains €4.90-9) Midway along the line of waterfront tavernas is this cheerful place noted for its very big breakfasts (€8), pastas and pizzas, and local dishes.

our pick Stamatis Taverna (☎ 22820 41283; mains €6-18) A friendly family-run taverna, on the terrace above the harbour, offering a great choice of starters such as *pikandiko* (feta cooked in a pot), or spinach pie. A delicious speciality is *exohiko* (baked lamb with sautéed onions, green peppers and cheese all wrapped in filo pastry; €9) Fish dishes are also on the menu and there are good vegetarian options.

Entertainment

Several lively music bars are clustered at the inner corner of the waterfront where the road bends to the right. They include Nameless, Aqua and Kimbo, all of which play mainstream disco with modern Greek music when the local crowd is in.

Shopping

Melita (☎ 22820 42005) For a special gift of Andros-made ceramics, try this delightful little pottery shop tucked between the Oti Kalo and Stamatis tavernas.

HORA (ANDROS) ΧΩΡΑ (ΑΝΔΡΟΣ)

pop 1508

One of the loveliest island capitals in the Cyclades, Hora unfolds its charms along a narrow

rocky peninsula between two bays on the east coast of Andros, 35km southeast of Gavriou. The town reflects Venetian origins in its numerous neoclassical buildings, the elegance of which is underscored by Byzantine and Ottoman accents. Hora's cultural pedigree is even more distinguished by its Museum of Modern Art and an impressive archaeological museum.

Orientation & Information

The bus station is on Plateia Goulandri, from where a narrow lane leads past a taxi rank, beside the spacious town square, to a T-junction. The post office is to the left. The marble-paved and notionally pedestrianised main street leads down to the right.

The National Bank of Greece and the Alpha Bank, both with ATMs, are halfway down the main street. Occasional steps lead down left to the old harbour area of Plakoura, and to Nimborio Beach.

Further down the main street is the pretty central square, Plateia Kairi, with tree-shaded tavernas and cafés watched over by the Andros Archaeological Museum. Steps again descend from here, north to Plakoura and Nimborio Beach and south to Paraporti Beach. The street passes beneath a short arcade and then continues along the promontory, bends left, then right and ends at Plateia Riva – a big, airy square with crumbling balustrades and a giant bronze statue of a sailor.

Sights & Activities

Hora has two outstanding museums; both were donated to the state by Basil and Elise Goulandris, of the wealthy ship-owning Andriot family. The **Andros Archaeological Museum** (☎ 22820 23664; Plateia Kairi; adult/child/student €3/2/free; ☎ 8.30am-3pm Tue-Sun) contains impressive finds from the settlements of Zagora and Paleopolis (9th to 8th century BC) on Andros' east coast, as well as items of the Roman, Byzantine and Early Christian periods. They include a spellbinding marble copy of the 4th-century bronze **Hermes of Andros** by Praxiteles.

The **Museum of Modern Art** (☎ 22820 22650; adult/student €6/3 Jun-Sep, €3/1.50 Oct-May; ☎ 10am-2pm & 6-8pm Wed-Sat & Mon, 10am-2pm Sun Jul-Sep, 10am-2pm Sat-Mon Oct-Jun) has earned Andros a reputation in the international art world. The main gallery features the work of prominent Greek artists, but each year from July to Septem-

ber, the gallery stages an exhibition of the works by one of the world's great artists. To date there have been annual exhibitions featuring original works by Picasso, Matisse, Braque, Toulouse-Lautrec and Miro, a remarkable achievement for a modest Greek island. To reach the gallery, head down the steps from Plateia Kairi towards the old harbour.

The huge **bronze statue** of a sailor that stands in Plateia Riva celebrates Hora's great seagoing traditions, although it looks more Russian triumphalist than Andriot in its scale and style. The ruins of a **Venetian fortress** stand on an island that is linked to the tip of the headland by the worn remnants of a steeply arched bridge.

A great option is to hire a self-drive boat and head out to some of the west and north coast's glorious beaches, most of which are difficult to reach by road. **Riva Boats** (☎ 22820 24412, 6974460330; Hora) has superb 4.5m Norwegian-built open boats with 20HP outboards. They are very seaworthy and come complete with life raft and anchor, and even a mobile phone. You do not need a licence to drive these boats. They can carry four adults comfortably. Hire per boat for a minimum of one day is about €90. The boats can be hired through Riva's shop and office, located in the narrow road leading to Nimborio Beach. Riva can also arrange for boats to be hired from Batsi.

Scooters and motorbikes can be hired from Riva down at Nimborio Beach, and through Karaoulanis Rooms (see below) for €12 to €18. Riva also sells fishing tackle and boat fittings.

Sleeping & Eating

Karaoulanis Rooms (☎ 22820 24412, 6974460330; www.androsrooms.gr; d/ apt €50/100) Down by the old harbour area there's a friendly welcome at this tall old house, whose rooms and apartments have been refurbished in recent years to the highest standards. There are excellent discount prices in low season. Greek, English and French are spoken by family members. Check here also for scooter and boat hire.

Alcioni Inn (☎ 22820 24522, 6973403934; alcioni@hellastourism.gr; Nimborio; d from €70 to €80) These self-catering rooms are very smart and comfortable. They are in the midst of the main waterfront, just across the road from the beach, but have a nicely secluded and relaxing atmosphere.

Niki (☎ /fax 22820 29155; xenonaw.nik@g.mail.com; s/d/tr €70/80/95) Imaginative restoration of this handsome old house has preserved beautiful timber ceilings and galleries. It's on the main street and there's a large veranda where you can relax and get breakfast for about €8, or a coffee.

Ermis (☎ 22820 22233; Plateia Kairi) On the square is this pleasant little café and pastry shop.

Nonna's (☎ 22820 23577; Plakoura; mains €3.50-9) A small, family-run mezedhes place on the old harbour, next to Karaoulanis Rooms. Nonna's main dishes are fresh fish from the family's own boat. Monkfish and red mullet are two well-prepared dishes that are often available. Vegetarians have a decent choice, too, from salads to zucchini pie.

Palinorio (☎ 22820 22881; Nimborio; mains €8-15; ☎ 11am-2am) There's a great choice of traditional dishes, as well as good service and value at this popular taverna on the waterfront at the edge of Nimborio Beach. Shellfish dishes are more expensive, but are prepared with skill.

AROUND ANDROS

Between Gavriou and Paleopolis Bay are several pleasant beaches, including **Agios Kyprianos**, where there's a little church with a taverna close by, **Delavoia**, one half of which is naturist, **Anerousa** and **Green**.

Paleopolis, 7km south of Batsi on the coast road, is the site of Ancient Andros, where the Hermes of Andros was found. The small but intriguing **Archaeological Museum of Paleopolis** (☎ 22829 41985; admission free; ☎ 8.30am-3pm Tue-Sun) displays and interprets finds from the area.

If you have transport, a worthwhile trip is to head down the west coast of the island before turning northeast at Batsilianos through a charming landscape of fields and cypresses to reach **Ormos Korthiou**, a bayside village that lacks only a decent beach to give it full resort status. Head north from here along a lovely coastal road that climbs and turns through raw hills and wooded valleys for 20km to reach Hora.

North from Hora the road climbs into the mountains passing the pleasant village of **Stenies**, where **Taverna Barbarola** (☎ 22820 23111; mains €5-8) is a worthwhile stop for excellent traditional Andriot cooking, with a terrific view thrown in. Beyond Stenies the road heads over high hills before descending in twists and turns to Batsi.

ROMANCING THE STONES

The best structures made by humankind, from simple walls to cathedrals, often seem to grow naturally from the ground. On Andros and Tinos there are two compelling examples of this serendipity. Andros is famous for its network of stone walls that wriggle across the wild landscape of the island's hills. The walls are built of large flat slabs (often trapezium-shaped) that are interspersed with smaller clusters of boulders. Many older walls are in decay but there is now a programme of repair and of new wall building. The result adds a rich visual emphasis to the rugged landscape.

On Tinos, hundreds of white-painted dovescotes pepper the landscape. They are like tiny palaces, 'embroidered' with symbols of trees, wagon wheels, triangles, chevrons and sun symbols; all worked in slate and stone and then whitewashed, creating a rich interplay of light and shade. It's said that the Venetians first introduced dovescotes to the Cyclades, but most surviving structures date from the 18th and 19th centuries. The breeding of pigeons was an important island trade for many centuries. The birds supplied meat for the winter months, droppings for field manure and feathers for bedding.

TINOS THNOS

pop 8614

Hora, the port of Tinos, glows with religious fervour during Orthodox festivals at the splendid Church of Panagia Evangelistria, home to the sacred icon of the Megalochari, the Holy Virgin. A steady trickle of pilgrims continues throughout the year. The icon is one of Greece's most famous and is said to have been found in 1822 on land where the church now stands. Healing powers were accorded to the icon, thus leading to mass pilgrimage and a commercial future for Tinos.

Yet, beyond the overt religious life, Tinos survives as an island of great natural beauty. Its landscape of rugged hills is dotted with over 40 villages that protrude like marble outcrops from the brindled slopes. Scattered across the countryside are countless ornate dovescotes, legacy of Venetian influence (see boxed text, above). There is a strong artistic tradition on Tinos, not least in the sculptors' village of Pyrgos in the north of the island where the island's marble quarries are located. However, religion still takes centre stage in Hora, although the town rattles and hums around it all like a typical island port should.

Getting There & Away FAST BOAT & CATAMARAN

There are at least three services daily to Mykonos (€9.50, 15 minutes) and Rafina (€34, 1¼ hours), plus daily services to Paros (€21.70, 1¼ hours), five weekly to Piraeus

(€43, three hours), four weekly to Naxos (€20, 1½ hours), Santorini (€33.20, 2¼ hours) and Ios (€28.50, two hours) and one daily to Syros (€9, two hours).

FERRY

At least six ferries daily go to Mykonos (€4.50, 30 minutes), and four daily to Rafina (€17.50, 3½ hours) and Andros (€9, 1½ hours). There are at least two daily to Syros (€5, 50 minutes) and Piraeus (€27, six hours).

Four weekly ferries go to Ikaria via connections through Mykonos (€16, 3½ hours) and Syros (€18, 3½ hours).

Three ferries weekly go to Thessaloniki (€37.10, 18 hours), and there are four ferries weekly to Paros (€8.80, five hours) and Santorini (€16.60, eight hours).

Two weekly services run to Naxos (€11, 4¼ hours) and Iraklio on Crete (€25, 10¼ hours).

Getting Around

From June to September there are frequent buses from Hora (Tinos) to Porto and Kionia (€1.20, 10 minutes) and several daily to Panormos (€3.30, one hour) via Kampos (€1.20, 15 minutes) and Pyrgos (€3, 50 minutes). Buses leave from the station on the waterfront, opposite the Blue Star Ferry Office, where there's a timetable in the window.

Motorcycles (per day €15 to €20) and cars (minimum per weekday €44; on weekends €60) can be hired from a number of outfits along the waterfront at Hora. Rates drop

out of season. **Vidalis Rent a Car & Bike** (☎ 22830 25670; Trion Ierathon 2) is a reliable firm.

HORA (TINOS) ΧΩΡΑ (ΤΗΝΟΣ)

Hora, also known as Tinos, is the island's capital and port. The harbourfront is lined with cafés and hotels and the narrow streets behind are full of restaurants and tavernas. The streets leading up to the Church of Panagia Evangelistria are full of numerous shops and stalls crammed with souvenirs and religious ware.

Orientation

There are two ferry departure quays, the locations of which visitors definitely need to know. Locals know them as 'ports'. The Outer Port is the dock for conventional ferries, including the bigger high-speed ones. It is about 300m to the north of the main harbour. The Middle Port, where smaller fast ferries such as Sea Jet and Flying Cats dock, is at the north end of the town's main waterfront.

When you buy a ferry ticket it's essential to check which of these two ports your

ferry is leaving from. Allow at least 20 minutes to walk from the centre of town to the Outer Port.

The uphill street of Leoforos Megaloharis, straight ahead from the middle of the main waterfront, is the route pilgrims take to the church. The narrower Evangelistria, to its right, also leads to the Church of Panagia Evangelistria.

Information

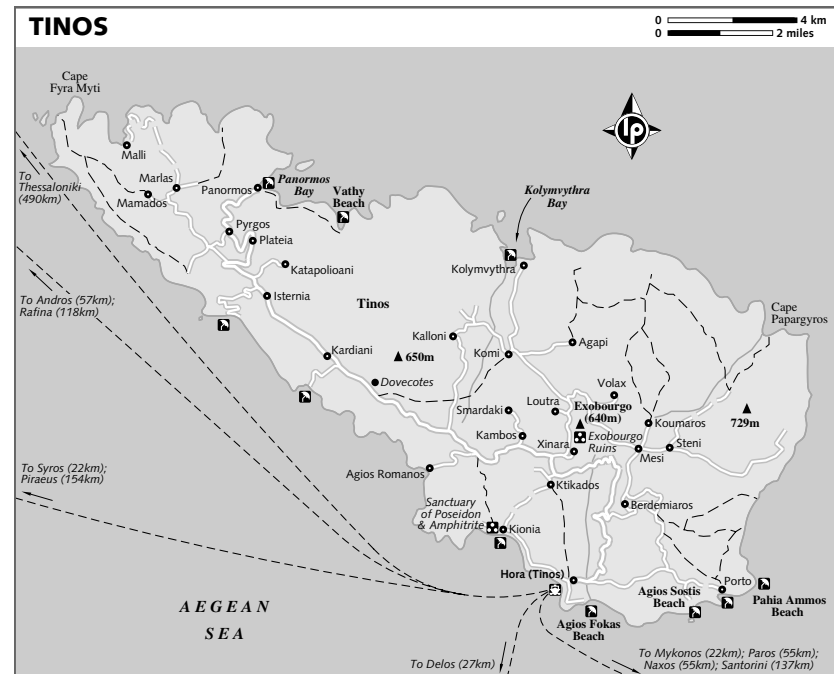
The post office is at the southeastern end of the waterfront, just past the bus station, and the National Bank of Greece (with ATM) is 50m left of Hotel Posidonion.

Malliaris Travel (☎ 22830 24241; fax 22830 24243; malliaris@thn.forthnet.gr; Paralia) On the waterfront near Hotel Posidonion; sells ferry tickets.

Port police (☎ 22830 22348; Kionion) Just up from Windmills Travel.

Symposion (☎ 22830 24368; Evangelistria 13; internet access per 30min €3) A pleasant café-restaurant with internet access.

Windmills Travel & Tourism (☎ 22830 23398; www.windmillstravel.com; Kionion 2) Just across the way from



the Outer Port ferry quay, this is very helpful, and staff can arrange accommodation, car hire and much more.

Sights

The neoclassical **Church of Panagia Evangelistria** (Church of the Annunciation; ☎ 8am-8pm) is built of marble from the island's Panormos quarries. The complex lies within a pleasant courtyard flanked by cool arcades. Inside the main building the acclaimed icon of the Holy Virgin is draped with gold, silver, jewels and pearls, and is surrounded by gifts from supplicants. A hanging garden of fabulous chandeliers and lampholders fills the roof space.

Set into the surface of the street on one side of Leoforos Megaloharis is a rubberised strip, complete with side lights. This is used by pilgrims, who may be seen at any time of year heading for the church on their hands and knees, pushing long candles before them. The final approach is up carpeted steps.

Within the church complex, several **mus**seums house religious artefacts, icons and secular artworks.

The small **archaeological museum** (☎ 22830 22670; Leoforos Megaloharis; admission €2; ☎ 8am-3pm Tue-Sun), on the right-hand side of the street as you descend from the church, has a collection that includes impressive clay *pithoi* (Minoan storage jars), grave reliefs and sculptures.

Sleeping

Hora should be avoided on 25 March (Annunciation), 15 August (Feast of the Assumption) and 15 November (Advent). If not booked into a hotel months ahead, you'll have to join the roofless devotees who sleep on the streets at these times.

BUDGET

Camping Tinos (☎ 22830 22344; www.camping.gr/tinos; camp sites per adult/child/tent €7/4/4, bungalows with/without bathroom €28/20) This is a fine site with good facilities. It's south of the town near Agios Fokas, about a five-minute walk from the ferry quay, and is clearly signposted from the waterfront. A minibus meets ferries.

Nikoleta (☎ 22830 24719; nikoleta@thn.forthnet.gr; Kapodistriou 11; s/d €25/35) Some distance inland from the south end of town, but its spotless, uncluttered rooms are exceptional value and come with a charming welcome. There is a lovely garden area.

Faros (☎ 22830 22712; s/d/tr €35/50/80; ☎) This is a handy place for the Outer Port ferry quay.

The rooms are colourful and quite quirky, but vary in size. The small outside courtyard is filled with leafy colour.

MIDRANGE

Boreades (☎ 22830 23845; s €45-55, d €50-65, apt €160) A fairly ordinary location belies the style and comfort of this interesting place, which manages to convey an almost country-house ambience with its interior plan and creative décor. Breakfast in the sunny lounge is €7.

Oceanis (☎ 22830 22452; oceanis@mail.gr; Akti G Drosou; s/d/tr €45/75/97.50; ☎) Rooms are not overly large at this modern, well-run hotel, but they are clean and well equipped. They even have some genuine, if very small, single rooms. There's a lift to all floors. Breakfast is €5.

Hotel Posidonion (☎ 22830 23123; fax 22830 25808; Paralia 4; s/d €60/75; ☎) In a very convenient position, midwaterfront, Posidonion is a long-established, popular hotel. Communal lounges overlooking the harbour are an endearing feature. Most rooms are well appointed and comfortable.

Eating

Pallada Taverna (☎ 22830 23516; Plateia Palladas; mains €6-8) Ever popular, and offers Greek dishes with well-prepared veal, pork and lamb specialities as well as a good selection of vegetarian dishes. Local wines from the barrel are persuasive and the house retsina is brisk.

Symposion (☎ 22830 24368; Evangelistria 13; mains €6-17) This is an elegant café-restaurant reached by a pretty staircase. It does breakfasts (€4 to €16), crepes and sandwiches (€3 to €7.50), as well as pasta dishes and tasty mixed plates (€8 for one, €18 for two) of feta, anchovies, Tinian cheese and sun-dried tomatoes.

our pick Metaxy Mas (☎ 22830 25945; Plateia Palladas; mains €6.50-19) Stylish service, décor and modern Mediterranean cuisine make this one of the best restaurants on Tinos. Tasty starters such as giant beans with spinach, or the succulent cheese pie, pave the way for mains that include veal casserole or cuttlefish with spinach.

To Koutouki tis Elenis (☎ 22830 24857; G Gagou 5; mains €7-15) Gagou is a narrow lane that veers off from the bottom of Evangelistria. It's crammed with tavernas whose tables fill every corner. This cosy little place is one of the best and dishes up cheerful local treats such as chicken in lemon sauce, rabbit in tomato sauce and a tasty fish soup.

Drinking & Entertainment

Koursaros (☎ 22830 23963; ☎ 8am-3am) This long-established bar spins an engaging mix of rock, funk and jazz. It's at the far end of the line of cafés across from the Middle Port.

In the back lanes opposite the Middle Port there's a clutch of music and dance bars such as Volto and Sibylla, glowing with candy-coloured light and churning out clubby standards and Greek pop as a counterbalance to sacred song.

AROUND TINOS

Escaping from Hora's religious-commercial grip is essential if you want to make the most of Tinos and its numerous villages, beaches and dramatic countryside.

At **Porto**, 6km east of Hora, there's a fine, uncrowded beach facing Mykonos, while about 1km further on from Porto is the even lovelier **Pahia Ammos Beach**.

Kionia, 3km northwest of Hora, has several small beaches. Near the largest are the scant remains of the 4th-century-BC site of the **Sanctuary of Poseidon & Amphitrite**, a once enormous complex that drew pilgrims in much the same way as the present Church of Panagia Evangelistria does today.

About 12km north of Hora on the north coast is **Kolymyithra Bay**, where there are two pleasant sandy beaches, the smaller with sun loungers, umbrellas and a seasonal café, the larger backed by reed beds.

On the north coast, 28km northwest of Hora, is the seaside village of **Panormos**, from where the distinctive green marble, quarried in nearby **Marlas**, was once exported. The waterfront at Panormos is lined with tavernas.

Pyrgos, on the way to Panormos, is a handsome village where even the cemetery is a feast of carved marble. Many of the houses have attractive fanlights. During the late 19th century and early 20th century Pyrgos was the centre of a remarkable tradition of sculpture sustained by the supply of excellent local marble.

Just across the road from the car park at the entrance to Pyrgos is the **Museum House of Yannoulis Halepas** (adult/child €5/2.50; ☎ 10.30am-2.30pm & 5-8pm Apr-mid-Oct). It's a fascinating place, where the sculptor's humble rooms and workshop, with their striated plaster walls and slate floors, have been preserved. An adjoining gallery has splendid examples of the work of local

sculptors. Outstanding are *Girl on a Rock* by Georgios Vamvakis; *Hamlet* by Loukas Doukas; and a copy of the superb *Fisherman* by Dimitrios Filippolis.

About 6km directly north of Hora is the tiny village of **Volax**, a scribble of white houses at the heart of an amphitheatre of low hills studded with thousands of dark-coloured boulders. Behind the doorways, Volax really is old Greece. There's a small **folklore museum** (ask at the nearest house for the key), an attractive Catholic chapel and a small outdoor theatre. There are a couple of tavernas at the entrance to Volax.

The ruins of the Venetian fortress of **Exo-bourgo** lie 2km south of Volax, on top of a mighty 640m rock outcrop.

SYROS ΣΥΡΟΣ

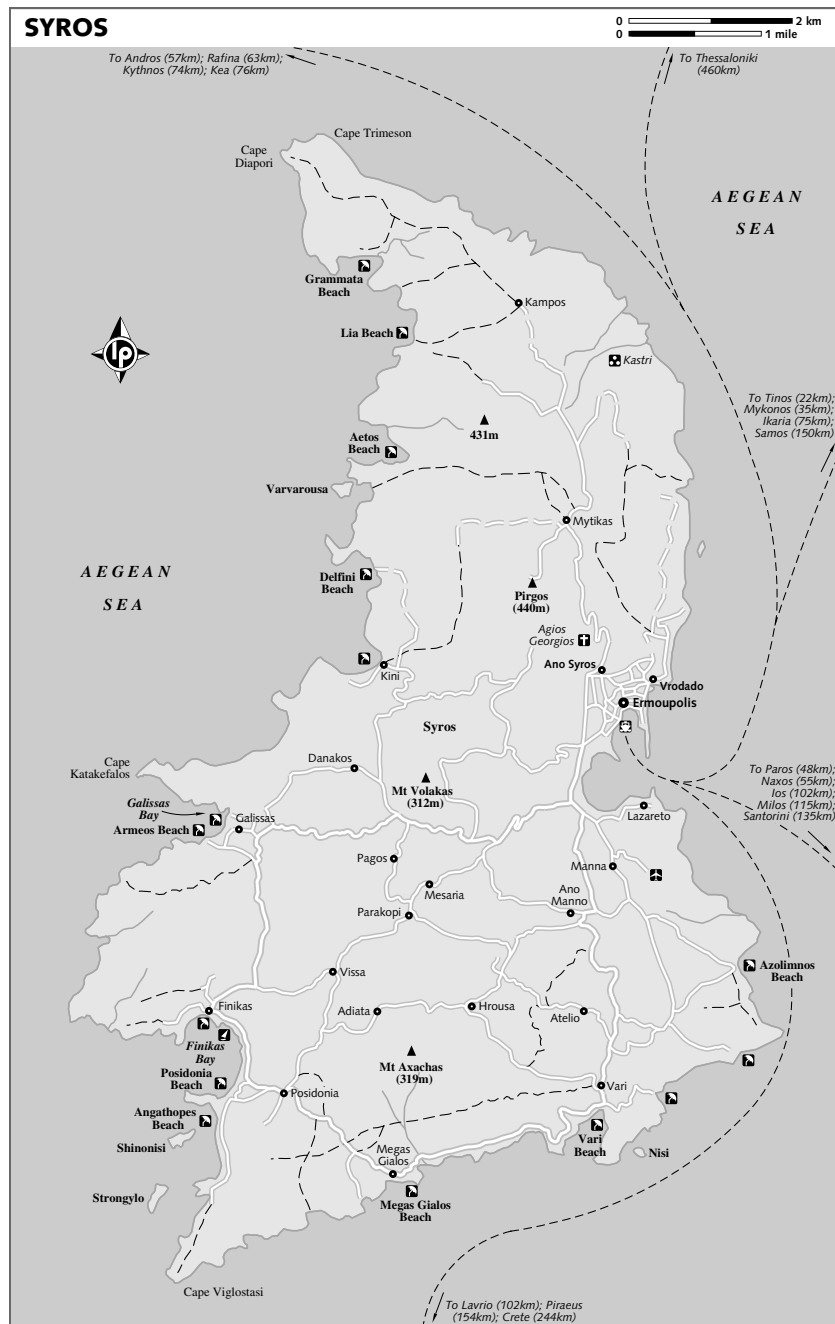
pop 20,220

Head for Syros if you want to witness authentic Greek island life and culture. This is one of the smallest islands of the Cyclades, yet it has the highest population. It is the legal and administrative centre of the entire archipelago, the ferry hub of the northern islands, and home to Ermoupolis, the largest and handsomest of all Cycladic towns. If you break the lightest of laws anywhere in the Cyclades, you may end up at court in Syros. Make your visit voluntary, instead; the rewards are substantial and include exposure to everyday island life, great eating and sleeping options and a handful of small but pleasant beaches.

History

Excavations of an Early Cycladic fortified settlement and burial ground at Kastri in the island's northeast date from the Neolithic period (2800-2300 BC).

During the medieval period Syros had an overwhelmingly Roman Catholic population. Capuchin monks and Jesuits settled on the island during the 17th and 18th centuries, and such was the Catholic influence that France was called upon by Syros to help it during Turkish rule. Later Turkish influence was benevolent and minimal and Syros busied itself with shipping and commerce. During the War of Independence thousands of refugees from islands ravaged by the Turks fled to Syros. They brought with them an infusion



of Greek Orthodoxy and a fresh commercial drive that made Syros the commercial, naval and cultural centre of Greece during the 19th century. This position was lost to Piraeus in the 20th century. The island's industrial mainstay of shipbuilding has declined, but Syros still has textile manufacturing, a thriving horticultural sector, a sizable administrative and service sector and a small but healthy tourism industry.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Olympic Airlines (☎ 22810 88018; www.olympicairlines.com) operates at least one flight daily, except Thursday and Saturday, to and from Athens (€60, 35 minutes). The Olympic Airlines office is at the airport, but you can buy tickets at tourist agencies.

FAST BOAT & CATAMARAN

Services depart daily for Piraeus (€40, 2½ hours), Lavrio (€35, 1¼ hours), Paros (€16, 45 minutes), Naxos (€21, 1¼ hours), Mykonos (€15, 30 minutes), Tinos (€11, 30 minutes) and Santorini (€42.50, 3¼ hours).

FERRY

There are at least four ferries departing daily from Syros to Piraeus (€24, four hours), with two going to Tinos every day except Tuesday (€5.60, two hours), and four heading to Mykonos (€8, 1¼ hours).

There are two daily ferries to Paros (€8.50, 1¼ hours) and Naxos (€11.50, three hours). There are daily connections to Andros via Tinos (€11, 2¾ hours) and two direct connections weekly (€7.40, 4¼ hours).

At least four ferries weekly go to Amorgos (€19, 4½ hours), Ios (€19.50, 2¾ hours), Milos (€11.70, six hours) and Santorini (€23, 5¼ hours), and one weekly ferry serves Crete (€23.40, 8½ hours).

At least twice weekly there are boats to Andros (€7.40, 1¼ hours), Kea (€9.40, three hours), Kythnos (€7.50, two hours), Sifnos (€8.20, four hours), Serifos (€7.50, two to four hours), Kimolos (€11.70, five hours) and Anafi (€16.80, eight hours).

Five ferries weekly go to Patmos in the Dodecanese (€26, 4½ hours).

Each week, three ferries head to Sikinos (€11.10, five hours), Folegandros (€11.70, six hours), Lavrio (€14.30, 3½ hours), and Leros in the Dodecanese (€28, seven hours).

Two ferries a week go to Kos (in the Dodecanese; €32, nine hours) and Rhodes (€38.50, 15½ hours), and one goes to Thessaloniki (€35.20, 15 hours).

Getting Around

About nine buses per day run a circular route from Ermoupolis to Galissas (€1.30, 20 minutes), Vari (€1.30, 30 minutes) and Kini (€1.50, 35 minutes). They leave Ermoupolis every half-hour from June to September and every hour the rest of the year, alternating clockwise and anticlockwise routes. All of these buses will eventually get you to where you want to go, but it's always worth checking which route is quickest.

There is a bus from Ermoupolis bus station to Ano Syros at 10.30am every morning except Sunday (€1.20, 15 minutes). **Taxis** (☎ 22810 86222) charge €6 to Ano Syros from the port.

Cars can be hired per day from about €40 and scooters per day from €12 at numerous hire outlets on the waterfront.

ERMOUPOLIS ΕΡΜΟΥΠΟΛΗ

pop 13,000

Ermoupolis grew out of the refugee town that sprang up during the Greek War of Independence. The refugees were Greek Orthodox and, after initial resentments, lived in harmony with the original Catholic majority. In 1826 the town was named formally after Hermes, the god of commerce. Ermoupolis is a lively and likeable place, full of paved stairways, restored neoclassical mansions and handsome public buildings.

The Catholic settlement of Ano Syros and the Greek Orthodox settlement of Vrodado lie to the northwest and northeast, looking inland, and both spill down from high hilltops, with even taller hills rising behind.

Orientation

The main ferry quay is at the southwestern end of the port. The bus station is on the waterfront, just along from the main ferry quay.

To reach the central square, Plateia Miaouli, walk northeast from the ferry quay for about 200m, and then turn left into El Venizelou for another 100m. There are public toilets at the eastern end of the port, off Antiparou and on Akti Papagou near the ferry quay.

Information

There is an information booth run by the Syros Hotels' Association on the waterfront, about 100m northeast of the main ferry quay; opening times are not guaranteed. The website www.syros.com has a reasonable amount of information.

Alpha Bank (El Venizelou) Has an ATM.

Enjoy Your Holidays (☎ 22810 87070; Akti Papagou 2) Opposite the bus station. Sells ferry tickets and can advise on accommodation.

Eurobank (Akti Ethnikis Andistasis) Has an ATM.

Hospital (☎ 22810 96500; Papandreou)

Internet Café (☎ 22810 85330; Ground fl, Town Hall, Plateia Miaouli; per 20min €2) Not the fastest connection.

InSpot (☎ 22810 85330; Akti Papagou; per hr €3.40; ☎ 24hr) Faster connections but often monopolised by game fans.

Piraeus Bank (Akti Petrou Ralli) Has an ATM.

Police station (☎ 22810 82610; Plateia Vardaka) Beside the Apollon Theatre.

Port police (☎ 22810 82690/88888; Plateia Laikis Kyriarchias) On the eastern side of the port.

Post office (Protopapadaki) Offers Western Union money transfer.

Teamwork Holidays (☎ 22810 83400; www.teamwork.gr; Akti Papagou 18) Just across from the main ferry quay; very helpful and friendly. Sells ferry tickets and can arrange accommodation, excursions and car rental.

Sights

The great square of **Plateia Miaouli** is the finest urban space in the Cyclades and is worthy of Athens. Once the sea reached as far as here, but today the square is well inland and is flanked by palm trees and lined along its south side by cafés and bars. The north side of the square is dominated by the magnificent neoclassical **town hall**. The small **archaeological museum** (☎ 22810 88487; Benaki; admission €3; ☎ 8.30am-3pm Tue-Sun) at the rear, founded in 1834 and one of the oldest in Greece, houses a tiny collection of ceramic and marble vases, grave stelae and some very fine Cycladic figurines.

The **Industrial Museum of Ermoupolis** (☎ 22810 84764; Papandreou; adult/concession €3/2; ☎ 10am-2pm Wed-Mon, 6-9pm Thu-Sun Jun-Sep, 10am-2pm Mon, Thu & Fri, 10am-2pm & 6-9pm Wed, Sat & Sun Oct-May) is about 1km from the centre of town. It celebrates Syros' industrial and shipbuilding traditions and occupies old factory buildings. There are over 300 items on display.

Ano Syros, originally a medieval settlement, has narrow alleyways and whitewashed houses. It is a fascinating place to wander around and has views of neighbouring islands. Be wise and catch the bus up to the settlement. From its bus terminus, head into the steeply rising alleyways and search out the finest of the Catholic churches, the 13th-century **Agios Georgios** cathedral, with its star-fretted barrel roof and baroque capitals. Follow your nose down from the church, past stunning viewpoints to reach the main street, where you'll find the little **Vamvakaris museum** (☎ 10am-1pm Mon-Sat Jul & Aug), which celebrates the life of Markos Vamvakaris, a famous *rembetika* (blues) singer who was born in Ano Syros.

Activities

Cyclades Sailing (☎ 22810 82501; csail@otenet.gr) can organise yachting charters, as can **Nomikos Sailing** (☎ 22810 88527); call direct or book through **Teamwork Holidays** (☎ 22810 83400).

Tours

You can book a day coach trip (adult/child €20/7) round the island on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday through **Teamwork Holidays** (☎ 22810 83400).

Sleeping

Ermoupolis has a reasonably broad selection of rooms, with most budget options

clustered above the waterfront near where the ferry docks. Most places are open all year.

Ipatia Guesthouse (☎ 22810 83575; www.ipatiaguesthouse.com; Babagiou 3; s/d with bathroom €40/65, without bathroom €30/40) Located in the Vaporia district, so called after the wealthy 19th-century *vaporaria* (steamship) captains who built neoclassical mansions here. Ipatia is one such building. It overlooks Agios Nikolaos Bay and has been lovingly preserved. There's a comfy, lived-in atmosphere and the spacious rooms have antique furnishings and remnants of original ceiling frescoes. There's a warm welcome, in keeping with the house's family feel.

Hermoupolis Rooms (☎ 22810 87475; Naxou; s/d €35/50) A cheerful, family run place with clean, well-kept rooms tucked away in narrow Naxou, a short climb up from the waterfront. Front rooms open on to tiny, bougainvillea-cloaked balconies.

Sea Colours Apartments (☎ 22810 81181/83400; Athinas; s/d €50/66, apt €72) Facing Agios Nikolaos Bay, these pleasant apartments are ideally placed for the quieter end of town, yet are within a short stroll of the centre.

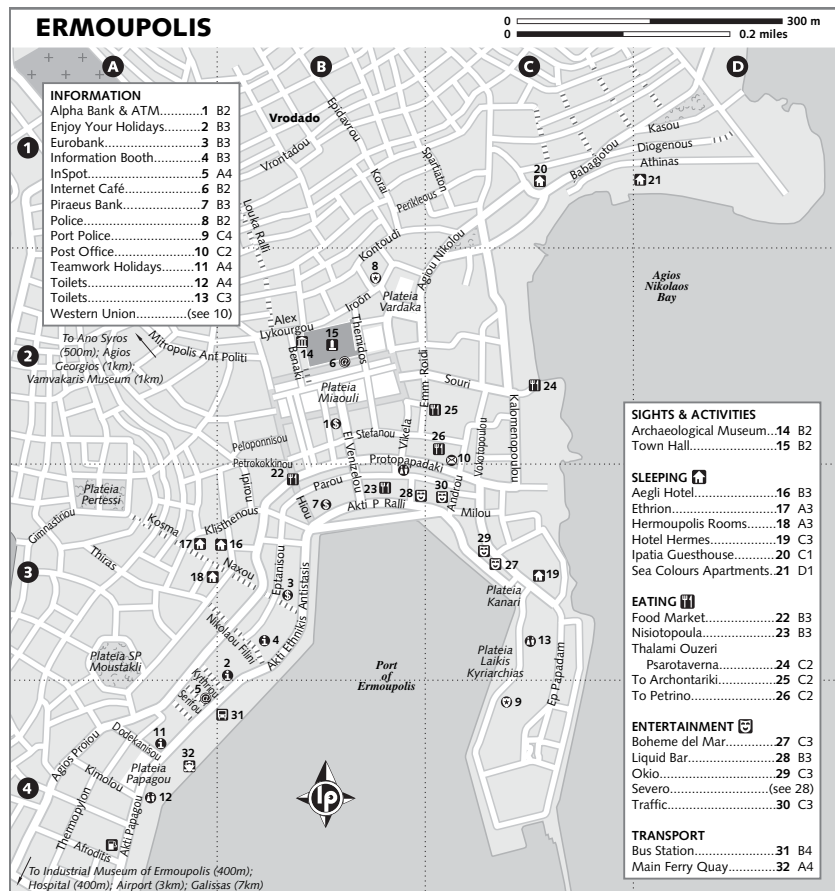
ourpick Ethrion (☎ 22810 89066; www.ethrion.gr; Kosma 24; s €50, d €60-75; ☎ ☎) One of the best choices in town, these comfortable, relaxing rooms occupy a modern but traditionally designed building in a quiet location. There's a pleasant courtyard and the owner is friendly and helpful. The price range indicates rooms with or without balconies and sea views. The town centre and harbourfront are only a minute or two away.

Hotel Hermes (☎ 22810 83011; fax 22810 87412; Plateia Kanari; s/d/tr incl buffet breakfast €56/95/110) The Hermes is a long established hotel in a fine position on the eastern side of the waterfront. Public rooms are spacious and the bedrooms are smart, with bright interiors. There's a decent restaurant offering grills and pasta (mains €6.30 to €12).

Aegli Hotel (☎ 22810 79279; hotegli@otenet.gr; Klisthenous 14; s/d incl breakfast €83/100; ☎ ☎) Located in a quiet side street, this fine, peaceful hotel has an air of exclusivity. Rooms are comfortable, and upper-floor balconies at the front have great views over the port. There are good views over the town from a roof garden.

Eating

Standard restaurants and cafés throng the waterfront, especially along Akti Petrou Ralli



and on the southern edge of Plateia Miaouli. However, dip into the quieter corners and you'll find places with character and good food.

Nisiotopoula (☎ 22810 81214; Antiparou 20; mains €3-7) You'll find Greek family cooking at its best at this down-to-earth taverna tucked behind the waterfront. On offer are delicious soups, pies and omelettes as well as chicken and pork dishes. A regular local clientele tells its own story.

To Archontariki (☎ 22810 81744; Emm Roidi 8; mains €5.50-12) An extensive menu of classic Greek dishes and a good selection of regional wines, including Santorini vintages, make this long-established restaurant a local favourite. Tasty starters include spinach with mushrooms, and leek pie, while lamb with artichoke and baked shrimps with tomato are typical of the appetising main dishes.

To Petrino (☎ 22810 87427; Stefanou 9; mains €6-10) Swaths of bougainvillea bedeck the pleasant little enclave of Stefanou, and at its heart is the popular To Petrino. Cheerful service goes with delicious traditional dishes such as *kotopoula ala Spetsiota* (pieces of chicken fillet with peppers, tomatoes and melted cheese) and squid stuffed with feta.

our pick **Thalami Ouzeri Psarotaverna** (☎ 22810 85331; Kalomenopoulou 1; mains €6-18) You can eat on a balcony overlooking Agios Nikolaos Bay at this great restaurant, which occupies an old Vaporia mansion. Seafood is by the kilogram, but reasonably priced treats, such as a local *kakavia* (soup of fish, onions and tomatoes), or squid stuffed with feta cheese, green peppers and tomatoes, are only part of an excellent menu.

The best place to buy fresh produce is at the small, but well-stocked, morning **food market** (Hiou).

Entertainment

Music bars are clustered along the waterfront on Akti Petrou Ralli. They play mostly lounge music by day and a mix of house, funk and modern Greek music by night. They draw a great local crowd and rock into the early hours.

Boheme del Mar (☎ 22810 83354) Heads up the young scene.

Liquid Bar (☎ 22810 82284) About 60 metres north west of Boheme del Mar and also lively.

ELEFThERIA Michael Clark

There is a distinctive type of young, modern Greek woman. Confident, wise, stylish, focused, thoughtful, fearless. And just a little bit scary. She has attitude, in the best sense of the word. On Syros there is Eleftheria Thymianou. She does not let me off with anything. 'That's a great name,' I say. 'Eleftheria equals "freedom". What do they call you for short?' I get the full weight of Greek history in my face. 'No-one shortens my name,' she says. 'That name means something...'

Severo (☎ 22810 88243) Next door to Liquid Bar, this has a great racy atmosphere and good DJs.

A couple of spirited little bars in the same area are **Traffic** (☎ 22810 86197) and **Okio** (☎ 22810 84133).

GALISSAS ΓΑΛΗΣΣΑΣ

When Ermoupolis becomes too metro for you, head west on a short bus ride to Galissas, a small resort with one of the best beaches on Syros, several cheerful bars and restaurants and some great places to stay. The main bus stop is at an intersection behind the beach.

Sleeping

Two Hearts Camping (☎ 22810 42052; www.twohearts-camping.com; camp sites per adult/child/tent €8/4/4) Set in a pistachio orchard about 400m from the village and beach, this popular camping ground has good facilities; from the main bus stop, cross the intersection and follow the signs. A minibus meets ferries in high season.

Oasis (☎ 22810 42357, 6948274933; freri_stefania@hotmail.com; s/d/studios €20/35/45) A genuine 'oasis', this lovely little farm has bright and airy rooms, and the welcome is charming. It's about 400m back from the village and is set amid olive trees and vines. Follow signs from the main bus stop intersection in the village.

Hotel Benois (☎ 22810 42833; www.benois.gr; s/d/tr incl breakfast €70/90/110, apt €150; ☎ ☎ ☎) In recent years there's been a sparkling makeover at this family-run hotel, including the addition of a swimming pool. Courtesy and friendly service are backed up by pleasant, spick-and-span rooms. It's close to the beach at the northern entrance to the village.

Eating & Drinking

Iliovasilema (☎ 22810 43325; mains €4-12) Next door to Savvas, this is another good local eatery where fish is by the kilo, but where you can enjoy reasonably priced seafood starters and a delicious fish soup. Vegetarians can side-step specials such as wild boar, venison and ostrich, and go for a pick'n'mix of nonmeat dishes.

Socrates (☎ 22810 43284; mains €4.50-9) Eat beneath a leafy canopy on the garden terrace at this well-run place that offers tasty dishes such as *giouvetsi* (choice pieces of lamb in a tomato sauce, baked with pasta). Turn right at the junction by the bus stop and it's about 100m on the left.

our pick **Savvas** (☎ 22810 42998; mains €6-10) Locally sourced ingredients and authentic Syran cuisine make Savvas one of the best tavernas around. Try the pork in honey and aniseed, or the chicken fillet stuffed with bacon, cheese and mushrooms. The taverna is just a few metres from the bus stop.

Also recommended is the Green Dollars Bar on the beach road, for daytime snacks and music while you drink. Rock and reggae are favourites from 10am to 4am.

AROUND SYROS

The beaches south of Galissas all have *domatia* (rooms, usually in a private home) and some have hotels. Some beaches are narrow roadside strips of dullish sand, but they're not too busy. They include **Finikas**, **Posidonia** and **Angathopes**. Back on the main road and on the south coast proper, the town of **Megas Gialos** has a couple of roadside beaches.

The pleasant **Vari Bay**, further east, has a sandy beach with some development, including a couple of hotels and a beachfront taverna.

Kini, out on its own on the west coast, north of Galissas, has a long stretch of beach and is developing into a popular resort with standard modern hotels, apartments, cafés and tavernas.

MYKONOS MYKONOS

pop 9660

Mykonos glitters happily under the sun and carries its glamorous and camp reputation with panache, but expensively so. Beneath the gloss this is a charming and hugely en-

tertaining place where the sometimes frantic mix of good-time holidaymakers, cruise ship crowds, posturing fashionistas and preening celebrities is magically subdued by the cubist charms of Mykonos town, a traditional Cycladic maze. Local people have had 40 years to get a grip on tourism and have not lost their Greek identity in doing so.

Be prepared, however, for the oiled-up lounge lifestyle of the island's packed main beaches, the jostling street scenes and the relentless, yet sometimes forlorn, partying. That said, there's still a handful of off-track beaches worth fighting for. Plus, the stylish bars, restaurants and shops have great appeal, and you can still find a quieter pulse amid the labyrinthine old town. Add to all this the nearby sacred island of Delos, and Mykonos really does live up to its reputation as a fabulous destination.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Olympic Airlines (☎ 22890 22327; www.olympicairlines.com), based at the airport, runs two to three flights daily between Athens and Mykonos (€70, 40 minutes).

Aegean Airlines (☎ 22890 28720; www.aegeanair.com), also at the airport, has daily flights to Athens (€74, 40 minutes) and Thessaloniki (€88, one hour).

Sky Express (☎ 28102 23500; www.skyexpress.gr) has about four flights a week to Iraklio (€99, one hour and 30 minutes) via Santorini (€74, 35 minutes) and one flight a week direct to Iraklio (45 minutes). It also runs four flights a week to Rhodes (€119, two hours) via Santorini. You can book tickets through Mykonos Accommodation Centre (p385).

Until suspension of operations in July of 2007, **AirSea Lines** (☎ toll free 801 11 800 600; www.airsealines.com) ran one seaplane flight a day from Thursday to Monday between Lavrio and Mykonos. It also ran one flight daily, Thursday to Monday, between Mykonos and Kalymnos, and Kos. Due to upgrading requirements the company suspended its Aegean schedule in July 2007. The schedule was still suspended at the time of writing (September 2007). The company states, however, that it will resume its Aegean service as soon as possible and readers are advised to check the company website.

FAST BOAT & CATAMARAN

There are at least three daily services connecting Mykonos with Tinos (€9.50, 15 minutes).

Four daily services go to Rafina (€39.90, two hours) and three go to Piraeus (€48, three hours) and Syros (€15, 30 minutes). There are three daily services to Paros (€17, one hour), which connect with services to Naxos (€19.50, 1½ hours), Santorini (€28, three to four hours) and Ios (€26.10, 2¾ hours). One service daily continues to Iraklio on Crete (€47.90, five hours).

FERRY

Mykonos has two ferry quays: the Old Port, 400m north of town, where some conventional ferries and smaller fast ferries dock; and the New Port, 2km north of town, where the bigger fast ferries and some conventional ferries dock. This is not a hard and fast rule, and when buying outgoing tickets you should always double-check which quay your ferry leaves from. There are bus connections to the New Port from the northern bus station (see Bus, right) and the Old Port (€1.20, 10 minutes); a taxi to the New Port is €4.

Mykonos has daily services to Rafina (€21.40, 4½ hours) via Tinos (€4.50, 30 minutes) and Andros (€11, 2½ hours), and to

Piraeus (€24.50, six hours) via Tinos and Syros (€7, 1½ hours).

There are three ferries a week to Santorini (€15, six hours).

There is one ferry a week to Thessaloniki (€37.30, 18½ hours) and Crete (€23.90, 13 hours).

There are three ferries a week to Samos (€21.50, 4½ hours) and Ikaria (€15.50, 2¼ hours).

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Buses from the southern bus station serve Mykonos' airport (€1.20), which is 3km southeast of the town centre. Make sure you arrange an airport transfer with your accommodation (expect to pay around €6) or take a **taxi** (☎ 22890 22400, airport 22890 23700); there's a fixed fare of €5.90.

BUS

Hora (Mykonos) has two main bus stations and a pick-up point at the New Port. The **northern bus station** (☎ 22890 23360; Remezzo) is behind the OTE office and has frequent departures

to Agios Stefanos via Tourlos (€1.20), and services to Ano Mera, (€1.20), Elia (€1.50), and Kalafatis Beach (€1.70). Trips range from 20 minutes to 40 minutes. There are two buses daily to Kalo Livadi Beach (€1.50). Buses for the New Port, Tourlos and Agios Stefanos stop at the Old Port. The **southern bus station** (☎ 22890 23360; Fabrika Sq [Plateias Yralos]) serves Agios Ioannis Beach (€1.20), Ornos, (€1.20), Platys Gialos (€1.20), Paraga (€1.20) and Paradise Beach (€1.50). Trips range from 15 minutes to 40 minutes.

Bus tickets are sold at street kiosks, mini-markets and tourist shops. You must buy a ticket before boarding (buy return tickets if required), validate the ticket on the bus and hang on to it. From 12.15am to 6am all prices are €1.50.

CAÏQUE

Caïque (little boat) services leave Hora (Mykonos) for Super Paradise, Agrari and Elia Beaches (June to September only) and from Platys Gialos to Paradise (€6), Super Paradise (€7), Agrari (€6) and Elia (€6) Beaches.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

For cars, expect to pay (depending on model) about €40 to €98 per day in high season, or €31 to €80 in low season. For scooters it's about €15 to €30 in high season, €10 to €20 in low season. Reliable hire agencies are the **Mykonos Accommodation Centre** (p385) and **O.K. Rent A Car** (☎ 22890 23761; Agio Stefanos). There are several car and motorcycle rental firms around the southern bus station in Hora.

TAXI

If you're after a **taxi** (☎ 22400 23700/22400), you'll find them at Hora's Taxi Sq (Plateia Manto Mavrogenous) and by the bus stations and ports. The minimum fare is €2.85, but there's a charge of €0.30 for each item of luggage. Fares to beaches: Agios Stefanos €4, Ornos €4.40, Platys Gialos €5.90, Paradise €7.20 and Elia €11.40.

HORA (MYKONOS) ΧΩΡΑ (MYKONOΣ)

pop 6467

Mykonos (also known as Hora), the island's port and capital, is a warren of narrow alleyways that wriggle between white-walled buildings, their stone surfaces webbed with

white paint. In the heart of the Little Venice area, tiny flower-bedecked churches jostle with trendy boutiques, and there's a deluge of bougainvillea round every corner. Without question, you will soon pass the same junction twice. It's entertaining at first, but can become frustrating as throngs of equally lost people and pushy Mykonos veterans add to the stress. For quick-fix navigation, familiarise yourself with main junctions and the three main streets of Matogianni, Enoplou Dymaion and Mitropoleos, which form a horseshoe behind the waterfront. The streets are crowded with chic fashion salons, cool galleries, jangling jewellers, languid and loud music bars, brightly painted houses and torrents of crimson flowers – plus a catwalk cast of thousands.

Orientation

The town proper is about 400m to the south of the Old Port ferry quay, beyond the tiny town beach. A busy square, Plateia Manto Mavrogenous (usually called Taxi Sq), is 100m beyond the beach and on the edge of Hora. East of Taxi Sq, the busy waterfront leads towards the Little Venice neighbourhood and the town's iconic hilltop row of windmills. South of Taxi Sq and the waterfront, the busy streets of Matogianni, Zouganeli and Mavrogenous lead into the heart of Hora.

The northern bus station is 200m south of the Old Port ferry quay, on the way into town. The southern bus station is on Fabrika Sq, on the southern edge of town. The quay from where boats leave for Delos is at the western end of the waterfront.

Information

BOOKSHOPS

International Press (☎ 22890 23316; Kambani 5) Numerous international newspapers, although editions are a day late. Also a very wide range of magazines and books.

EMERGENCY

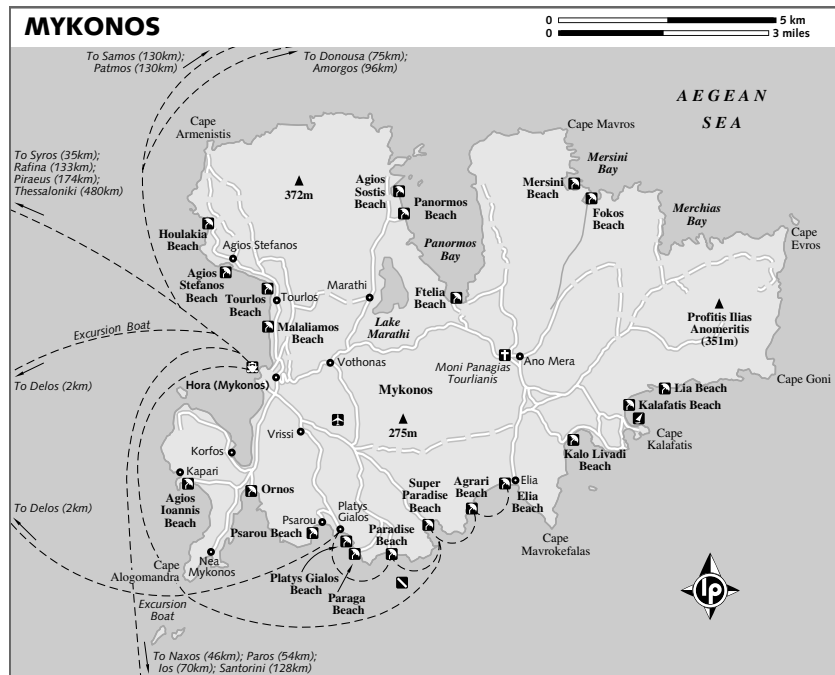
Police station (☎ 22890 22716) On the road to the airport.

Port police (☎ 22890 22218; Akti Kambani) Midway along the waterfront.

Tourist police (☎ 22890 22482) At the airport.

INTERNET ACCESS

Angelo's Internet Café (☎ 22890 24106; Xenias; per hr €4.50) On the road between the southern bus station and the windmills.



HORA (MYKONOS)

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To Malaliamos (500m);
 Tourlos (1km);
 New Port (1.5km);
 Agios Stefanos (2.5km)

To Hospital (1km);
 Ano Mera (7km);
 Kalo Livadi Beach (9km);
 Elia Beach (10km)

To Airport (3km);
 Police (2km);
 Platis Gialos (4km);
 Paradise Beach (3.5km)

To Ornos Beach (3.5km);
 Agios Ioannis Beach (5km)

Earth Internet Café (☎ 22890 22791; Zani Pitaraki 4; per 15min €1)

MEDICAL SERVICES

First Aid Clinic (☎ 22890 22274; Agiou Ioannou)

Hospital (☎ 22890 23994) Located about 1km along the road to Ano Mera.

MONEY

Several banks by the Old Port quay have ATMs. Eurobank has ATMs at Taxi Sq and Fabrika Sq.

POST

Post office (☎ 22890 22238; Laka) In the southern part of town.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Tourist Information Office (☎ 22890 25250; www.mykonos.gr; Plateia Karaoli Dimitriou; ☎ 9am-9pm Jul & Aug, 10am-5pm Easter-Jun, Sep & Oct) This is a new venture for Mykonos, introduced in 2007. It's run by the municipality and at the time of writing was just getting into gear with a few leaflets, maps and information printouts. Time will tell.

TRAVEL AGENCIES

Delia Travel (☎ 22890 22322; travel@delia.gr; Akti Kambani) Halfway along the inner waterfront. Sells ferry tickets and tickets for Delos. It's also the French Consulate.

Mykonos Accommodation Centre (☎ 22890 23408; www.mykonos-accommodation.com; 1st fl, Enoplon Dynameon 10) Well-organised and very helpful for a range of information, including gay related. Can also arrange midrange, top-end and gay-friendly accommodation.

Sea & Sky (☎ 22890 22853; Akti Kambani) Offers information and ferry tickets.

Windmills Travel (☎ 22890 23877; www.windmills-travel.com; Fabrika Sq) By the southern bus station, this is another helpful office for all types of information, including gay related. Also sells ferry tickets.

Sights

MUSEUMS

Mykonos has five museums. The **archaeological museum** (☎ 22890 22325; adult/concession €2/1; ☎ 8.30am-3pm Tue-Sat, 10am-3pm Sun) houses pottery from Delos and some grave stelae and jewellery from the island of Renia (Delos' necropolis). Chief exhibits include a statue of Hercules in Parian marble.

The **Aegean Maritime Museum** (☎ 22890 22700; Tria Pigadia; adult/concession €3/1.50; ☎ 10.30am-1pm & 6-9pm Apr-Oct) has a fascinating collection of nautical paraphernalia, including ships' models.

Next door, **Lena's House** (☎ 22890 22390; Tria Pigadia; admission free, donations appreciated; ☎ 6.30-9.30pm Mon-Sat, 7-9pm Sun Apr-Oct) is a charming late-19th-century, middle-class Mykonian house (with furnishings intact). It takes its name from its last owner, Lena Skrivanou.

The **Mykonos Folk Art Museum** (☎ 6932178330; Paraportiani; admission free; ☎ 5.30-8.30pm Mon-Sat, 6.30-8.30pm Sun Apr-Oct), housed in an 18th-century sea captain's house, features a large collection of furnishings and other artefacts, including old musical instruments.

The **agricultural museum** (☎ 22890 22748; Agiou Ioannou; admission free; ☎ 4.30-7.30pm Mon-Sat, 5.30-7.30pm Sun Jun-Sep) has displays including a renovated windmill, a miller's house, a threshing floor, and a wine press and other artefacts.

CHURCH OF PANAGIA PARAPORTIANI

Mykonos' most famous church is the rocklike **Panagia Paraportiani** (beyond Delos ferry quay on the way to Little Venice; admission free, donations appreciated; ☎ variable, usually open mornings). It comprises four small chapels plus another on an upper storey that is reached by an outside staircase. Visitors should avoid entering during services, unless for genuine worship rather than sightseeing.

Tours

Mykonos Accommodation Centre (☎ 22890 23408; www.mykonos-accommodation.com; 1st fl, Enoplon Dynameon 10) Organises guided tours to Delos (see p390). The centre also offers tours to Tinos, as well as Mykonos bus tours and boat cruises, wine and culture tours, and exclusive gay boat cruises.

Windmills Travel (☎ 22890 23877; www.windmills-travel.com; Fabrika Sq) The booking agent for snorkelling (€25 for 30 minutes) and island cruises (€35 to €55, four weekly).

Sleeping

There are scores of sleeping options in Mykonos, but if you arrive without a reservation between July and September and you find reasonably priced accommodation, grab it – 'budget' in Mykonos is relative, and this is reflected in the listings.

Otherwise, check out the local accommodation organisations – when you get off at the town ferry quay, you will see a low building with numbered offices. Number 1 is the **Hoteliers Association of Mykonos** (☎ 22890 24540; www.mha.gr; Old Port; ☎ 8am-midnight). The Association will book a room on the spot, but does not accept telephone bookings prior to your arrival.

Number 2 is the **Association of Rooms, Studios & Apartments** (☎ 22890 24860; www.mykonosfamilyhotels.com; ☎ 9am-10pm May-Sep, 9am-4pm Oct-Apr). If you choose domatia from the owners who meet ferries – they rev up into one of the most raucous scums in the Cyclades – check their exact location and ask if they charge for transport (some do).

If you plan to stay in Hora and want somewhere quiet, think carefully before settling for domatia on the main streets – bar noise until dawn is inevitable.

Some places only advertise doubles, but single occupancy may be negotiable. During late July and early August some hotels will only accept a minimum of three-night stays.

BUDGET

Hotel Philippi (☎ 22890 22294; chriko@otenet.gr; Kalogera 25; s €60-70, d €70-110; ☎) A pleasant garden full of trees, flowers and shrubs makes this a great choice in the heart of Hora. There's an appealing ambience in the bright, clean rooms that open onto a railed veranda overlooking the garden.

MIDRANGE

Pension Stelios (☎ 22890 24641, 6944273556; s/d/tr €85/100/130) A straightforward but well-equipped pension, Stelios has a hillside location halfway between the Old Port and town but is only a few minutes from the centre. There are great views over Hora from some of the small balconies. There are very good discounts in low season.

Hotel Apollon (☎ 22890 22223; fax 22890 24456; Akti Kambani; d with/without shower €90/65) An unashamed slice of traditional Mykonos in a prime position on the waterfront; the Apollon has old-fashioned furnishings to go with its well-kept rooms. The cheerful owner has survived the trendy gloss that has engulfed much of Hora.

Hotel Lefteris (☎ 22890 27117; lefterishot@yahoo.com; Apollonos 9; s/d €90/115, studios €180-230) A colourful entranceway sets the tone for this refuge from the mainstream hubbub of town. Tucked away just up from Taxi Sq, the Lefteris is something of an international meeting place for all ages. The conversation is always good, and the welcome is kind and friendly. Rooms are simple but comfy and bright, and the roof terrace is a great place to relax. Studios are well equipped and the hotel has other rooms nearby.

Terra Maria (☎ 22890 24212; www.terrariamariahotel.com; Kalogera; d €120; ☎) Sidestepping the

busier streets, this cool, relaxing place has bright, clean rooms and friendly staff. There's a leafy garden to go with the bright décor. One room is equipped for disabled use. Low season prices drop substantially.

Marios Hotel (☎ 22890 24670; www.marioshotel-mykonos.com; Kalogera 31; s/d incl breakfast €120/135; ☎) Located right in the heart of town and all its action, gay friendly Marios has a pleasant central garden, an attractive breakfast room and bar, and a Jacuzzi. Rooms have wooden floors and furnishings are a pleasant mix of old and new.

TOP END

Hotel Elysium (☎ 22890 23952; www.elysiumhotel.com; s €210-280, d €230-300, tr €360; ☎ Apr-Oct; ☎) Located high above the main town in the School of Fine Arts area, this stylish gay hotel (although non-gays are also welcome) has cool décor and good-sized comfortable rooms. There are plenty of special trimmings, including personal computers in suites and deluxe rooms, and there's a spa and massage service.

Hotel Belvedere (☎ 22890 25122; www.belvederehotel.com; Rohari; s €236-460, d €546-706; ☎) It's all billowing drapes and white linen amid the modernist landscape and furnishings of this leading Mykonos hotel, where sea and town views are panoramic in all but the cheapest rooms. There's also a restaurant with Japanese and South American influences. Jacuzzis, massage therapy, a fitness studio, a music and movie library and wi-fi seal the deal.

Hotel Semeli (☎ 22890 27466; www.semelihotel.gr; Rohari; s/d €286/310, studios €370-500; ☎) Adjacent to the Belvedere, the Semeli has the same level of luxury, but in a more traditional Cycladic style of white and pastel décor.

Eating

High prices don't necessarily reflect high quality in many Mykonos eateries. There are, however, excellent good-value restaurants of all kinds.

BUDGET

Our pick Piccolo (☎ 22890 22208; Drakopoulou 18; snacks €3.70-7.50) There are no linen-draped tables at this impeccable little place, but the food is delicious, from crisp, fresh salads to a great selection of sandwich fillings that include Mykonian prosciutto, *manouri* (soft cheese), tomato and oregano, smoked eel or salmon.

Antonini's (☎ 22890 22319; Taxi Sq; dishes €5.50-9) A long-standing local hang-out with standard, but reliable, Greek food and a view of all of Mykonos passing by.

There's a cluster of cheap fast-food outlets and creperies around town:

Bugazi (☎ 22890 24066; snacks €2.50-5) Off the edge of Taxi Sq.

Taki's (☎ 22890 24848; Agion Saranta) A popular place with locals, Taki's dishes out kebabs and souvlaki for €2, and other budget fillers for €5 to €7.

There are also several supermarkets and fruit stalls, particularly around the southern bus station area, and there's a food market on the waterfront where Mykonos' famous pelicans hang out.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

Magic Garden (☎ 22890 26217; Tourlianis; dishes €8-15) There's a genuine garden ambience beyond the welcoming entrance bar of this long-standing and well-run restaurant. The food is prepared with a subtle touch to create delicious dishes such as shrimps in ouzo, and baked lamb with yogurt, garlic and nutmeg.

To Maerio (☎ 22890 28825; Kalogera 16; dishes €6.50-19) A simple, unpretentious menu of Mykonian favourites has earned this new eatery a good reputation. The mainly meat and poultry dishes include treats such as pieces of veal and pork in fresh tomato sauce, and beef fillet with parmesan in a wine sauce. Starters are just as tasty and there's a range of good salads.

Our pick Kalidionis (☎ 22890 27606; cnr Dilou & Gerasimou; mains €8.90-20.50) The chef-owner and staff at this enjoyable restaurant put heart and soul into their work, and the results are outstanding. Try the savory *kolokythokeftedes* (fried zucchini balls) or *imam baildi* (baked eggplant stuffed with chopped onion, garlic, parsley, tomatoes and feta) – it's worth getting your tongue around the name, and then the food. Casseroles and *mousakas* (sliced eggplant and mincemeat arranged in layers and baked – made the way it should be) add to the feast. Desserts are delicious. House wines and a worthy wine list complement the food, while the surroundings are relaxing and the service enthusiastic and friendly.

Appaloosa (☎ 22890 27086; Mavrogenous 1, Plateia Goumeniou; mains €8-22) International cuisine with a Mexican influence sets the tone at this friendly, popular, stylish place. Starters have great taste, in every sense, and there are salads, grills and pasta dishes, too. A hot line

in tequila and cocktails goes with the cool background sounds.

Eva's Garden (☎ 22890 22160; Plateia Goumeniou; dishes €9-27) Family run for many years, this is one of Hora's most reliable bets for authentic Greek cooking. There's everything from simple dishes such as dolmades and spinach pie to generous meat treats.

La Maison de Catherine (☎ 22890 22169; cnr Gerasimou & Nikou; meals €22-40) Classic Greek cuisine of the highest order – with a magic touch of subtle, international influences – ensures 'Catrine's' remains Mykonos' top restaurant. Relax in stylish surroundings over home-marinated anchovies with endives and tomato coulis, or lamb ribs in a delicious rosemary-flavoured sauce.

Also recommended:

Camares Cafe-Bar-Restaurant (☎ 22890 28570; Akti Kambani; dishes €5-15) On the waterfront just round from Taxi Sq. It offers decent helpings of meat dishes, salads and seafood.

Casa di Giorgio (☎ 6932561998; Mitropoleos; mains €5-22) Delicious pizzas and pastas, as well as good meat and seafood dishes, served on a big terrace.

Drinking

Halfway along Matogianni is the stylish **Lotus** (☎ 22890 22881; Matogianni 47), where you can sip drinks at the bar to the soothing strains of classical music. It also serves food.

Hora's Little Venice quarter (Venetia) is not exactly the Grand Canal, but it does offer the Mediterranean at your feet as well as rosy sunsets, windmill views, glowing candles and a swath of colourful bars. The music meanders through smooth soul and easy listening, but at quieter times bar staff play more esoteric and sharper sounds. A good spot is the friendly **Galleraki** (☎ 22890 27188; Little Venice), which turns out superb cocktails. Nearby, it's the sunset view at **Verandah Café** (☎ 22890 27400; Little Venice) while **La Scarpa** (☎ 22890 23294; Little Venice) lets you lean back from the sea on its cosy cushions. Further north, **Katerina's Bar** (☎ 22890 23084; Agion Anargyron) has a cool balcony and eases you into the evening's action with relaxing sounds.

Deeper into town, the relentlessly stylish **Aroma** (☎ 22890 27148; Enoplou Dymameon; ☎ breakfast) sits on a strategic corner, providing the evening catwalk view. It's open for breakfast and coffee as well.

Further down Enoplou Dymameon is **Astra** (☎ 22890 24767), where the décor is modernist Mykonos at its best, and where some of

THERE BE PIRATES

Pirates push people about and in the Cyclades of old, the story is that they pushed coastal communities to build new towns inland, out of sight of the sea and high up, if possible.

The maze-like alleyways of Hora (Mykonos) and of a score of other Cycladic villages are said to have evolved as a way of confusing raiders, although the records show that pirates got their way eventually.

Seventeenth century writer George Wheler said of Mykonos, 'The greatest part of the inhabitants are Pyrats...' He went on to describe how the pirates kept their wives, children and mistresses on the island and that the women of Mykonos had 'a greater reputation for beauty than chastity.'

The Greek islands have certainly had their fair share of villains. In Greek hagiography it is usually Turkish or North African pirates who get the blame, yet even the Rhodes-based Knights of St John were lightly disguised freebooters as they sailed along the thin line between crime and enterprise.

Athens' top DJs feed the ambience with rock, funk, house and drum'n'bass. Just across from Astra, cocktail-cool **Aigili** (☎ 22890 27265) has another useful terrace for people-watching. Matogianni has a couple of music bars, including **Angyra** (☎ 22890 24273), which sticks with easy listening and mainstream.

Scandinavian Bar (☎ 22890 22669; Ioanni Voinovich 9) is mainstream mayhem with ground-floor bars and a space upstairs for close-quarters moving to dance and retro hits. The cocktail nomenclature is sometimes as cheap as the prices.

For big action into the dawn, **Space** (☎ 22890 24100; Laka) is the place. The night builds superbly through a mix of techno, house and progressive, and the bar-top dancing fires up the late-night action. **El Pecado-Remezzo** (☎ 22890 24100; Polykandrioti) is run by the Space team but features lounge and dance for a more relaxing scene. Entry is around €20 to each of the clubs.

GAY BARS

Stylish fashion and sun-seducing indulgence have made Mykonos one of the world's great gay-friendly destinations. Gay life is less overt here, but Hora has many gay-centric clubs and hang-outs from where the late night crowds spill out onto the streets.

Kastro (☎ 22890 23072; Agion Anargyron) With a leaning towards stylish classical sounds, this is a good place to start the night on cocktails as the sun sets on Little Venice.

Diva (☎ 22890 27271; K Georgouli) A great upbeat atmosphere makes this a Mykonos favourite with a mixed crowd and a loyal lesbian core.

Porta (☎ 22890 27807; Ioanni Voinovich) Head downstairs into Porta's cruisy ambience

where things get crowded and cosy towards midnight.

Pierro's (☎ 22890 22177; Agias Kyriakis) Long-standing last stop for the nightwatch, where things round off with a backdrop of heavy-beat house and superbly over-the-top drag action. Takes over the outdoors, also.

Entertainment

Cinemanto (☎ 22890 27190; Pitaraki; admission €9; ☼ summer) Screenings are at 9pm and 11pm in the garden setting of this open-air cinema, which runs new films every few days. Most are English language films and any Greek films usually have English subtitles. There's a bar and you can get a tasty *souvlaki* (cubes of meat on skewers) for €2.50.

Shopping

The entire style scene vies for attention throughout Hora's streets and includes Lacoste, Dolce & Gabbana, Naf Naf, Diesel and Body Shop. But for something special, try **Parthenis** (☎ 22890 23089; Plateia Aelfkandra), featuring the couture – in black-and-white only – of Athens designer and long-time Mykonos resident Dimitris Parthenis.

The **Orama Art Gallery** (☎ 22890 26339; Fourmakia), off Enoplon Dymameon, shows the highly original work of Louis Orosko and Dorlies Schapitz. **Efimerides** (☎ 22890 79180; Drakopoulou 4) has an intriguing selection of *objets d'art*, and right opposite is **SurReal** (☎ 22890 28323; Drakopoulou 1), which specialises in leaflike leatherware. **Loom** (☎ 22890 27935; Kalogeta 43) has a collection of beautiful rugs, wall hangings, throws and other pieces.

Jewellery shops are a Mykonos fixture but a good bet is **Gold Market** (☎ 22890 22770; Polykandrioti), right at the entrance to town.

AROUND MYKONOS Beaches

Mykonos' beaches are in good supply and most have golden sand and attractive locations. They're not big enough for you to escape the crowds, and they're extremely popular and busy. Do not expect seclusion, especially from June onwards, although there is often a sense of *exclusion* as various cliques commandeer the sun loungers; segregation zones for style and sheer snobbery dominate at some locations.

You need to be a party person for the likes of Paradise and Super Paradise. It can all get very claustrophobic, but it's heaven for the gregarious. Most beaches have a varied clientele, and attitudes to toplessness and nudity also vary, but what's accepted at each beach is obvious when you get there.

The nearest beaches to Hora (Mykonos), which are also the island's least glamorous beaches, are **Malaliamos**; the tiny and crowded **Tourlos**, 2km to the north; and **Agios Stefanos**, 2km beyond. About 3.5km south of Hora is the packed and noisy **Ornos**, from where you can hop onto boats for other beaches. Just west is **Agios Ioannis**. The sizable package-holiday resort of **Platys Gialos** is 4km from Hora on the southwest coast. All of the above beaches are family orientated.

Platys Gialos is the caïque jumping-off point for the glitzier beaches to the east, such as Paradise and Super Paradise.

Approximately 1km south of Platys Gialos you'll find the pleasant **Paraga Beach**, which has a small gay section. About 2km east of here is the famous **Paradise**, which is not a recognised gay beach, but has a lively younger scene. **Super Paradise** (aka **Plintri** or **Super P**) has a fully gay section. Mixed and gay-friendly **Elia** is the last caïque stop, and a few minutes' walk from here is the small and pleasant **Agrari**. Nudity is fairly commonplace on all of these beaches.

North-coast beaches can be exposed to the *meltemi* (northeasterly wind), but **Panormos** and **Agios Sostis** are fairly sheltered and becoming more popular. Both have a mix of gay and nongay devotees.

For out-of-the-way beaching you need to head for the likes of **Lia** on the southeast coast, or the smaller **Fokos** and **Mersini** on the east coast, but you'll need tough wheels and undercarriage to get there.

ACTIVITIES

Dive Adventures (☎ 22890 26539; www.diveadventures.gr; Paradise Beach) offers a full range of diving courses with multilingual instructors. Two introductory dives cost €110; snorkelling costs €30. There are various dive packages starting with a five-dive deal for €199.

On a great location at the delightful Kalafatis Beach, **Planet Windsailing** (☎ 22890 72345; www.pezi-huber.com; Kalafatis Beach) offers one-hour or one-day windsurfing for €22 or €55 respectively, or a three-hour beginner's course for €75.

Also at Kalafatis, the friendly **Kalafati Dive Center** (☎ 22890 71677; www.mykonos-diving.com; Kalafatis Beach) has the full range of diving courses including a 10-boat dive deal for €320. A single boat dive with tank and weights costs €35, or with all equipment €50. A 'discover scuba diving' session is €45.

SLEEPING

Budget

Mykonos Camping (☎ 22890 24578; www.mycamp.gr; camp sites per adult/child/tent €10/5/5, bungalows per person €15-30, apt €180-235) This is a decent budget option by the pleasant Paraga Beach (a 10-minute walk from Platys Gialos), and has reasonable facilities and bungalows and apartments that sleep two to six people.

Midrange & Top End

Princess of Mykonos (☎ 22890 23806; fax 22890 23031; s/d/tr incl breakfast €148/190/216; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) Sea-view rooms are the most expensive at this swish hotel, which merges traditional island style with Art Deco touches. The hotel is above the fairly oversubscribed Agios Stefanos beach.

Ornos Beach Hotel (☎ 22890 23216; fax 22890 22483; s or d incl breakfast €165-195; ☎ ☎ ☎) Overlooking the busy beach, the traditional-style Ornos is right in the middle of the action and is handy for beach-hopping caïques.

EATING

Gurpick Christos (☎ 22890 26850; Agios Ioannis Beach; mains €6-15) Fisherman-chef and sculptor Christos runs his beachside eatery with unassuming style. It's right on the 'Shirley Valentine' shoreline, but Christos really is authentic Mykonos, where the best fish and seafood is prepared with skill. The mood is cool and relaxing around plates of superb

astakos (lobster) plucked fresh from a huge sea water storage basin at the centre of the restaurant. Some of Christo's sculptures can be seen on the beach out front.

Tasos Trattoria (☎ 22890 23002; Paraga Beach; mains €9-19) Central to Paraga Beach, this popular taverna offers terrific fish, chicken, pork and veal dishes and a great mix of veggie options.

ENTERTAINMENT

Cavo Paradiso (☎ 22890 27205; www.cavoparadiso.gr) When dawn gleams just over the horizon, hard core bar-hoppers move from Hora (Mykonos) to Cavo Paradiso, the megaclub that's been blasting at Paradise Beach since 1993 and has featured top international DJs ever since.

Ano Mera Ανω Μέρα

The village of Ano Mera, 7km east of Hora, is the island's only inland settlement and is worth a passing visit as an antidote to Hora and the beaches. It's a fairly unassuming place with a big central square flanked on three sides by tavernas. There's a big car park adjoining the main square.

The 6th-century **Moni Panagias Tourlianis** (☎ 22890 71249; ☎ 9am-1pm & 2-7.30pm) has a fine multistage marble bell tower with elegant carvings and 16th-century icons painted by members of the Cretan School, but pride of place goes to an exquisite wooden iconostasis carved in Florence in the late 1700s.

The central square is surrounded by tavernas; popular **Vangelis** (☎ 22890 71577; dishes €4.50-12) offers tasty spit roasts and fish dishes including *kakavia*.

DELOS ΔΗΛΟΣ

The Cyclades fulfil their collective name (*kyklos*) by encircling the sacred island of **Delos** (☎ 22890 22259; museum & sites adult/concession €5/3; ☎ 8.30am-3pm Tue-Sun), but Mykonos clutches the island jealously to its heart. Delos has no permanent population and is a soothing contrast to the relentless liveliness of modern Mykonos, although in high summer you share it all with fellow visitors. The island is one of the most important archaeological sites in Greece and the most important in the Cyclades. It lies a few kilometres off the west coast of Mykonos.

History

Delos won early acclaim as the mythical birthplace of the twins Apollo and Artemis and was first inhabited in the 3rd millennium BC. From the 8th century BC it became a shrine to Apollo and the oldest temples on the island date from this era. The dominant Athenians had full control of Delos – and thus the Aegean – by the 5th century BC.

In 478 BC Athens established an alliance known as the Delian League, which kept its treasury on Delos. A cynical decree ensured that no-one could be born or die on Delos, thus strengthening Athens' control over the island by expelling the native population.

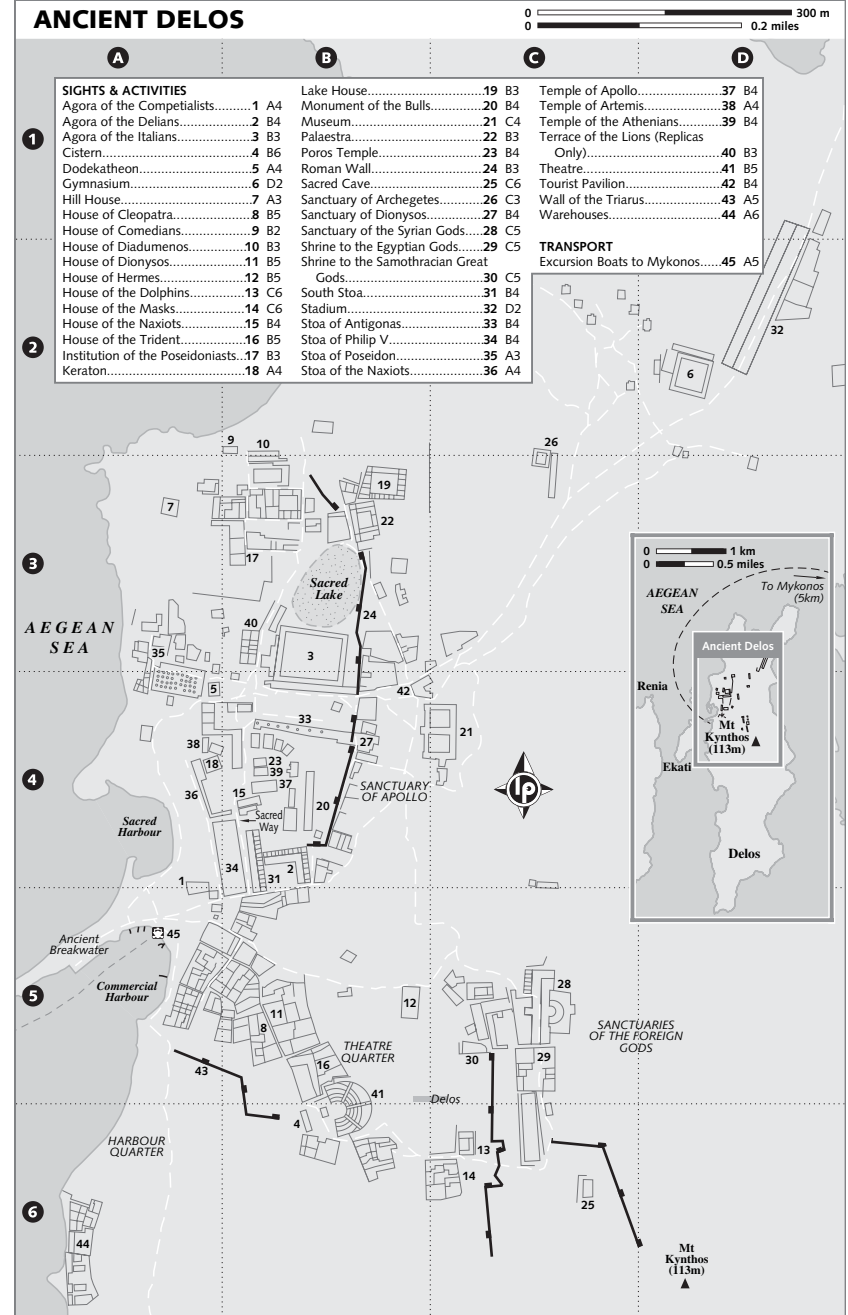
Delos reached the height of its power in Hellenistic times, becoming one of the three most important religious centres in Greece and a flourishing centre of commerce. Many of its inhabitants were wealthy merchants, mariners and bankers from as far away as Egypt and Syria. They built temples to their homeland gods, but Apollo remained the principal deity.

The Romans made Delos a free port in 167 BC. This brought even greater prosperity, due largely to a lucrative slave market that sold up to 10,000 people a day. During the following century, as ancient religions lost relevance and trade routes shifted, Delos began a long, painful decline. By the 3rd century AD there was only a small Christian settlement on the island, and in the following centuries the ancient site was looted of many of its antiquities. It was not until the Renaissance that its antiquarian value was recognised.

Getting There & Away

Boats for Delos (return €8, 30 minutes) leave Hora (Mykonos) at 9am, 9.50am, 10.15am, 11.10am, 11.40pm, 12.20pm and 12.50pm daily (except Monday, when the site is closed) from the Old Jetty at the western end of the harbour. The boats return between 11am and 3pm. Departure and return times are posted on the noticeboard at the Old Jetty, and you can buy tickets for the boat trip directly from the boat operators at the Old Jetty departure point. In Hora (Mykonos), **Delia Travel** (☎ 22890 22322; travel@delia.gr; Akti Kambani) and the **Mykonos Accommodation Centre** (☎ 22890 23408; www.mykonos-accommodation.com; 1st fl, Enoplon Dymaenon 10) sell tickets.

ANCIENT DELOS



The Mykonos Accommodation Centre organises guided tours to Delos at 10am every day except Monday, between May and September (adult/child €35/28, three hours). They include boat transfers from and to the Old Jetty, admission to the site and museum and an informative tour. Tours are in English, French, German and Italian, and in Spanish and Russian on request.

A boat departs for Delos from Mykonos' Platys Gialos (€10, 30 minutes) at 10.15am daily. Boats also operate to Delos from Paros and Naxos (€40).

ANCIENT DELOS

The quay where excursion boats dock is south of the tranquil Sacred Harbour. Many of the most significant finds from Delos are in the National Archaeological Museum (p120) in Athens, but the **site museum** still has an absorbing collection, including the lions from the Terrace of the Lions (those on the terrace itself are plaster-cast replicas).

Overnight stays on Delos are forbidden and boat schedules allow a maximum of about six or seven hours there. Bring water and food, as the cafeteria's offerings are poor value for money. Wear a hat and sensible shoes.

Exploring the Site

The following is an outline of some significant archaeological remains on the site. For further details, a guidebook from the ticket office is advised, or take a guided tour.

The rock-encrusted **Mt Kythnos** (113m) rises elegantly to the southeast of the harbour. It's worth the steep climb, even in the heat. On clear days there are terrific views of the surrounding islands from its summit.

The path to Mt Kythnos is reached by walking through the **Theatre Quarter**, where Delos' wealthiest inhabitants once built their houses. These houses surrounded peristyle courtyards, with colourful mosaics (a status symbol) being the most striking feature of each house.

The most lavish dwellings were the **House of Dionysos**, named after the mosaic depicting the wine god riding a panther, and the **House of Cleopatra**, where headless statues of the owners were found. The **House of the Trident** was one of the grandest. The **House of the Masks**, probably an actors' hostelry, has another mosaic of Dionysos resplendently

astride a panther, and the **House of the Dolphins** has another exceptional mosaic.

The **theatre** dates from 300 BC and had a large **cistern**, the remains of which can be seen. It supplied much of the town with water. The houses of the wealthy had their own cisterns – essential as Delos was almost as parched and barren then as it is today.

Descending from Mt Kythnos, explore the **Sanctuaries of the Foreign Gods**. Here, at the **Shrine to the Samothracian Great Gods**, the Kabeiroi (the twins Dardanos and Aetion) were worshipped. At the **Sanctuary of the Syrian Gods** there are the remains of a theatre where an audience watched ritual orgies. There is also a shrine area where **Egyptian** deities, including Serapis and Isis, were worshipped.

The **Sanctuary of Apollo**, to the northeast of the harbour, contains temples dedicated to the main man, and is the site of the much-photographed **Terrace of the Lions**. These proud beasts, carved from marble, were offerings from the people of Naxos, presented to Delos in the 7th century BC to guard the sacred area. To the northeast is the **Sacred Lake** (dry since it was drained in 1925 to prevent malarial mosquitoes breeding) where, according to legend, Leto gave birth to Apollo and Artemis.

PAROS ΠΑΡΟΣ

pop 12,853

Paros has a deserved reputation for being a friendly island, and the main port of Parikia certainly seems to welcome you with open arms. Beyond the port the island rises through gentle slopes to Mt Profitis Ilias (770m). White marble made Paros prosperous from the Early Cycladic period onwards – most famously, the *Venus de Milo* was carved from Parian marble, as was Napoleon's tomb.

The island is the main ferry hub for onward travel to other islands in the Aegean. The other major settlement, Naousa, on the north coast, is a charming resort with a colourful fishing harbour and a developing waterside lounge scene that may one day rival that of Mykonos. On the east coast is the charming low-key resort of Piso Livadi. Deep at the heart of Paros is the peaceful mountain village of Lefkes.

PAROS & ANTIPAROS



The smaller island of Antiparos, 1km southwest of Paros, is easily reached by car ferry or excursion boat.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Olympic Airlines (☎ 22840 91257; www.olympicairlines.com), at the airport, has daily flights to Athens (€57, 35 minutes).

Until suspension of operations in July of 2007, **AirSea Lines** (☎ toll free 801 11 800 600; www.airsealines.com) ran one seaplane flight a day from Thursday to Monday between Lavrio and Paros. Due to upgrading requirements the company suspended its Aegean schedule in July 2007. The schedule was still suspended at the time of writing (September 2007). The company states, however, that it will resume its Aegean service as soon as possible and readers are advised to check the company website

FAST BOAT & CATAMARAN

There are three services daily to Piraeus (€46, 2½ hours) and one a day to Rafina (€44.50, 2½ hours). There are also at least

two daily to Naxos (€13, 30 minutes), Tinos (€21.70, 1¼ hours), Syros (€16, 45 minutes), Mykonos (€16.50, one hour), Ios (€18.90, 1½ hours), Santorini (€30.50, 2¼ hours) and Amorgos (€22.50, 1½ to two hours). There is also one service daily to Iraklio on Crete (€46.90, four hours), and to Folegandros (€16, three hours and 50 minutes).

FERRY

There are around six boats daily to Piraeus (€28, five hours) and Naxos (€7, one hour), and three daily to Ios (€12.50, 2½ hours) and Santorini (€16.50, three to four hours). There are daily services to Mykonos (€6.80, 1¼ hours), Syros (€8.50, 1½ hours), Tinos (€8.80, 2½ hours) and Amorgos (€15, three to 4½ hours).

Six weekly go to Koufonisia (€15.50, 4½ hours); three weekly go to Sikinos (€7, three to four hours) and Anafi (€13.30, six hours), and four weekly go to Astypalea in the Dodecanese (€28.50, six hours).

There are three ferries weekly to Folegandros (€7.70, 5¼ hours).

There are two ferries weekly to Serifos (€7.80, 2½ hours), Sifnos (€4, two hours), Milos (€11.40, six hours), Kimolos (€9.60, seven hours), Schinoussa (€10, 2¼ hours) and Donoussa (€12.50, two to four hours).

There is one boat weekly to Thessaloniki (€37.50, 15 to 16 hours), Crete (€23.50, seven to eight hours), Skiathos (€29.60, 10 hours), Rhodes (€28.70, 12 to 15 hours) and Kalymnos (€22.70, 8¾ hours).

Getting Around

BUS

About 12 buses daily link Parikia and Naoussa (€1.20) directly, and there are seven buses daily from Parikia to Naoussa via Dryos, Hrysi Akti, Marpissa, Marmara, Prodromos, Lefkes, Kostos and Marathi. There are 10 buses to Pounta (for Antiparos; €1.90) and six to Aliko (via the airport; €1.20).

CAR, MOTORCYCLE & BICYCLE

There are rental outlets along the waterfront in Parikia and all around the island. A good outfit is **Acropolis** (☎ 22840 21830). Minimum rental per day in August for a car is about €45; for a motorbike it's €19.

TAXI

Taxis (☎ 22840 21500) gather beside the roundabout in Parikia. Fixed fares: airport €12, Naoussa €10, Pounta €8, Lefkes €10 and Piso Livadi €13. There are extra charges of €1.50 for luggage and €2.50 if you book ahead.

WATER TAXI

Water taxis leave from the quay for beaches around Parikia. Tickets ranging from €7 to €12 are available on board.

PARIKIA ΠΑΡΟΙΚΙΑ

pop 4522

The harbourfront of Parikia is a busy, cheerful place compared with the town's Cycladic old quarter, where peaceful, narrow streets wriggle around the built-over shell of the 13th-century Venetian *kastro*. The fortification crowns a slight rise above the waterfront, southeast of the ferry quay.

Orientation

The busy hub of Parikia is the windmill roundabout, where you come off the ferry quay. The main square, Plateia Mavrogenous, which was being refurbished in 2007,

is straight ahead from the windmill. The busy road to the left leads along the northern waterfront to the beach at Livadia. The road to the right follows the café- and taverna-lined southwestern waterfront.

Agora (Market St) is the main commercial thoroughfare running southwest from Plateia Mavrogenous through the narrow and pedestrianised streets of the old town.

The bus station is 50m to the right of the quay (looking inland) and the post office is 400m to the left.

Information

BOOKSHOPS

Newsstand (Ekantondapylia) A great selection of newspapers, magazines and books in all languages.

EMERGENCY

Police station (☎ 22840 23333; Plateia Mavrogenous)

Port police (☎ 22840 21240) Back from the northern waterfront, near the post office.

INTERNET ACCESS

Memphis.net (☎ 22840 23768; per 15min €1; ☎ 9am-midnight Jun-Aug, 10am-midnight Apr, May, Sep & Oct) An impressive range of services, including wifi for notebook computers and digital picture transfer.

Wired Café (☎ 22840 22003; Agora; per hr €3.50;

☎ 10.30am-2pm & 6-11pm Mon-Sat, 6-11pm Sun)

Reliable internet access in a relaxed atmosphere. Also has connections for laptop computers, and digital picture transfer.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Paros Life (www.paroslife.com)

LAUNDRY

Ostria Laundry (☎ 22840 21969, 6949079176; per wash & dry around €10; ☎ 9am-9pm Mon-Sat, 10am-2pm Sun Jun-Sep, 9am-2pm & 5.30-8.30pm Oct-May) The average load is ready in two hours at this friendly place.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Health Centre (☎ 22840 22500; Prombona; ☎ 9am-1.30pm Mon-Fri) Also has a dentist.

MONEY

All the following banks have ATMS.

Alpha Bank (Ekantondapylianis)

Commercial Bank of Greece (Plateia Mavrogenous)

Eurobank (Ekantondapylianis)

National Bank of Greece (Plateia Mavrogenous)

POST

Post office (☎ 22840 21236) Located 400m east of the ferry quay.

TOURIST INFORMATION

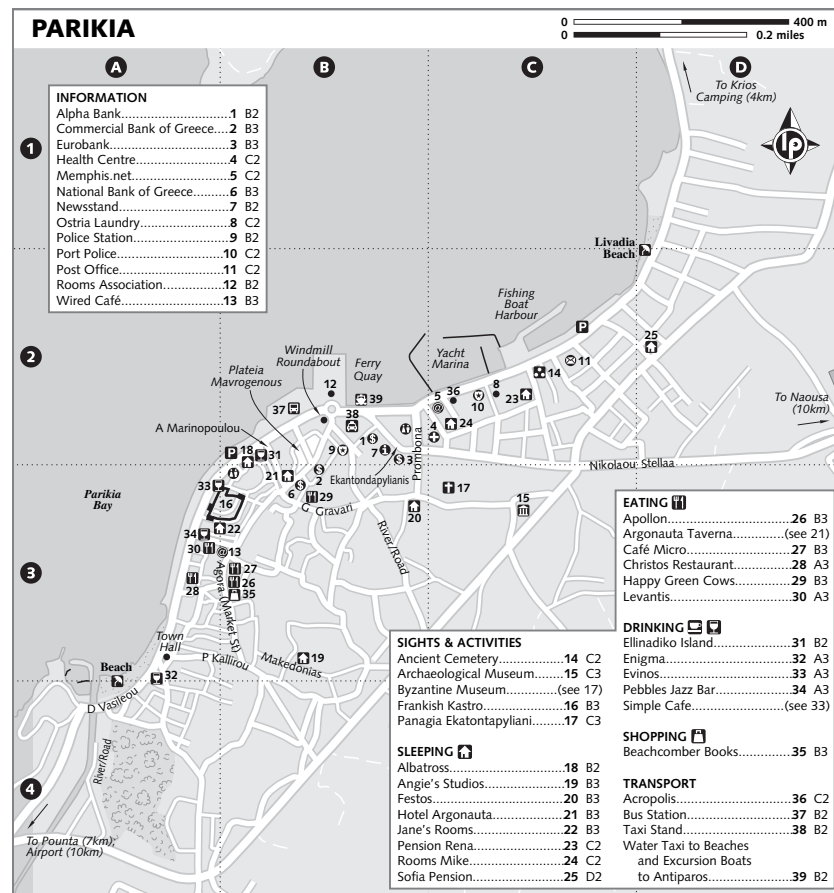
In high season, kiosks on the quay give out information on domatia and hotels (see Rooms Association, p396).

TRAVEL AGENCIES

Santorineos Travel Services (☎ 22840 24245) On the waterfront, just to the southwest of the windmill roundabout. Sells ferry tickets and can advise on accommodation and tours, and has a luggage store. Other services include bureau de change, FedEx and Moneygram (international money transfers).

Sights

The **Panagia Ekantondapylianis** (☎ 22840 21243; Plateia Ekantondapylianis; ☎ 7.30am-9.30pm Easter-Sep, 8am-1pm & 4-9pm Oct-Easter), which dates from AD 326, is one of the most splendid churches in the Cyclades. The building is three distinct churches: Agios Nikolaos, the largest, with superb columns of Parian marble and a carved iconostasis, is in the east of the compound; the others are the Church of Our Lady and the Baptistery. The name translates as Our Lady of the Hundred Gates, but this is a wishful rounding-up of a still-impressive number of doorways. The **Byzantine Museum** (admission €1.50; ☎ 9.30am-2pm & 6-9pm), within the compound, has a collection of icons and other artefacts.



Next to a school behind the Panagia Ekatondapyliani, the **Archaeological Museum** (☎ 22840 21231; admission €2; 🕒 8.30am-3pm Tue-Sun) has some interesting reliefs and statues, including a Gorgon, but the most important exhibit is a fragment of the 4th-century Parian Chronicle, which lists the most outstanding artistic achievements of ancient Greece. It was discovered in the 17th century and most of it ended up in the Ashmolean Museum, in Oxford.

North along the waterfront there is a fenced **ancient cemetery** dating from the 7th century BC; it was excavated in 1983. Roman graves, burial pots and sarcophagi are floodlit at night.

The **Frankish Kastro** was built on the remains of a temple to Athena that was built by Marco Sanudo, Duke of Naxos, in AD 1260. Not much of the *kastro* remains, save for a large wall that is a jigsaw of unpainted column bases and dressed blocks, where pigeons now roost in the cracks.

Tours

Santorineos Travel Services (☎ 22840 24245) can book bus tours of Paros (€30), boat trips to Mykonos and Delos (€40), and boats to Santorini (including a bus tour of the island, €60).

Excursion boats also make the trip to Antiparos in summer.

Sleeping

In August the **Rooms Association** (☎ 22840 22722, after hrs 22840 22220), located on the quay, has information on domatia; otherwise, owners meet ferries. For Hotel Association details, call ☎ 22840 51207 for information about hotels on Paros and Antiparos. All camping grounds have minibuses that meet ferries.

BUDGET

Krios Camping (☎ 22840 21705; www.krios.page.tl; camp sites per adult/child/tent €7/4/4; 🕒 Jun-Sep; 🚰) This fine site on the north shore of Parikia Bay is about 4km from the port, but there's a water taxi across the bay to Parikia every 10 minutes for €3 per person (return). You can rent tents for €8 and static tent 'bungalows' for €25. A new restaurant (dishes from €3.50 to €6) specialises in Greek and Italian food and offers breakfasts for €3.50 to €4.

Pension Rena (☎ 22840 22220; www.cycladesnet.gr/rena; s/d/tr €30/40/50; 🚰) One of the best choices

in town, these immaculate rooms are excellent value, and there's a charming welcome. The rooms are in a quiet but handy location just back from the waterfront. Air-conditioning is €5 extra. The owners also have good apartments to rent in Naousa.

Rooms Mike (☎ 22840 22856; roommike@otenet.gr; s/d/tr €30/40/50; studios €55; 🚰) A long-standing favourite in sight of the ferry quay, you'll never be short of a friendly chat and advice at Mike's place. There's a shared kitchen and a roof terrace. Studios are in another building, a block inland. Credit cards are accepted.

Festos (☎ 22840 21635; consolas@hol.gr; s/d incl breakfast €40/60; 🕒 Apr-Oct) has a central location in a quiet street. Rooms are a touch cramped, but are well kept and clean.

MIDRANGE

our pick Sofia Pension (☎ 22840 22085; www.sofiapension-paros.com; s/d/tr €60/70/80; 🚰 🚰 🚰) Set in a beautiful garden, full of colour and greenery and lovingly tended, this delightful place has immaculate rooms with individual décor. The owners are charming and helpful. Breakfast is available for €6.

Hotel Argonauta (☎ 22840 21440; www.argonauta.gr; Plateia Mavrogenous; s/d/tr €60/71/85; 🚰) A long-established family-run hotel with a central location overlooking Plateia Mavrogenous, the Argonauta has a welcoming atmosphere and has been recently refurbished. The furnishings have charming traditional touches, and the rooms are spotless and comfy and have double-glazing.

Angie's Studios (☎ 22840 23909/6977; www.angies-studios.gr; Makedonias; d €65; 🕒 Apr-Oct; 🚰 🚰) A delightful patio and garden glowing with bougainvillea and flowers surrounds these handsome studios. They're in a very quiet area that's a reasonable distance from the seafront. The studios are big and extremely well kept and each has its own kitchen. There are generous discounts in the low season.

Jane's Rooms (☎ 22840 21338; www.janesrooms.com; Kastro; s/d €50/65; 🚰) are pleasant rooms at the heart of the atmospheric Kastro area. There are also apartments on the north side of the bay at Krios, 1.5km out of town.

Eating

Café Micro (☎ 22840 24674; Agora) This great gathering spot for locals and visitors alike is bright and friendly and lies at the heart of Kastro. It offers breakfasts for €4, as well as coffee and

snacks, fresh fruit and vegetarian juices. There are drinks and music into the early hours.

Albatross (☎ 22840 21848; D. Vasiliou; mains €5-14) A classic fish taverna, Albatross is a local favourite not least because of its excellent fish dishes. The fisherman's salad for €14 is a sure bet, or savoury cuttlefish with spinach in an unfussy setting on the waterfront.

our pick Levantis (☎ 22840 23613; Kastro; dishes €9-15) A courtyard garden setting enhances the experience at this long-established restaurant at the heart of Kastro. There are subtle international touches to the imaginative cuisine in such dishes as Greek-style mussels with spicy sausage and ouzo. Other treats include rigatoni with spinach, wild mushrooms and roasted cherry tomatoes. Desserts such as white chocolate and amaretto mousse with sour cherries round things off. Excellent house wine is underpinned with a good choice of more-expensive wines.

Happy Green Cows (☎ 22840 24691; dishes €12-22; 🕒 7pm-midnight) Camp décor and cheerful service goes with the quirky name (inspired by a surreal dream, apparently) of this little eatery that is a vegetarian's delight. It's a touch pricey, but worth it for the often saucily named dishes. Meals include prawns in a vodka sauce, zucchini croquettes, crispy potatoes and yogurt sauce, or crispy pitta, peppers and creamy feta sauce.

Also recommended:

Christos Restaurant (☎ 22840 24666; Di Vasiliou; mains €4.50-8) Reliable Greek dishes and homemade pasta on the seafront.

Argonauta Taverna (☎ 22840 23303; mains €4.50-9) Attached to the hotel of the same name and offering sturdy Greek standards.

Apollon (☎ 22840 21875; Agora; mains €9-22) A long-established restaurant in Kastro. It exudes attention to detail, right down to the linen tablecloths and photo gallery of famous guests.

Drinking

Ellinadiko (☎ 22840 25046) Also known as 'Island', this popular local bar with foot-stomping Greek music and late-night dancing is in an alleyway between Plateia Mavrogenous and the seafront.

our pick Pebbles Jazz Bar (☎ 22840 22283) Heading down through Kastro in the late evening you'd think Pebbles' sunset backdrop was a vast painting. Perched above the seafront, this chilled, friendly place has classical music by day and jazz in the evenings, with

occasional live performers during July and August. Pebbles has an adjacent *mezehopolio* (restaurant specialising in mezedhes), open from 9am to 1am – it has breakfast from €4.50 to €7 and a great selection of mezedhes for €7 to €8, as well as omelettes and salads.

Enigma (☎ 22840 24664; D Vasileiou) One of several music bars along the southern waterfront, Enigma goes hard into the early hours, when the sounds are a touch more Greek.

There are more bars along the southern waterfront, including some busy rooftop places like Evinos and Simple Cafe.

Shopping

Beachcomber Books (☎ 22840 28282, 6973620525; Agora) Everything from electrical goods to secondhand books are sold and bought for credit at this cheerful Aladdin's Cave.

NAOUSA ΝΑΟΥΣΑ

pop 2316

Fast stealing some of the glitz and glamour of Mykonos, Naousa has transformed itself from a quiet fishing village into a popular tourist resort. Found on the north coast of Paros, there are good beaches nearby, and the town has several excellent restaurants and a growing number of beachside eateries and bars. Behind the waterfront is a maze of narrow whitewashed streets, peppered with fish and flower motifs and with a mix of smart boutiques and souvenir shops.

Orientation & Information

The bus from Parikia terminates some way up from the main square just in from the waterfront, where a dried-up riverbed serves as a road leading south and inland. The main street of Naousa lies on the left of the riverbed. If arriving by car, be warned: parking in certain areas is banned from June to September. Signs may not be clear, but the €35 fines are painfully so.

Naousa Information (☎ 22840 52158; 🕒 10am-midnight Jul & Aug, 11am-1pm & 6-10pm mid-Jun-Jul) can find you accommodation and is based in a booth by the main square.

The post office is a tedious uphill walk from the main square. There are several banks with ATMs around the main square.

For internet access, try **Jamnet3** (☎ 22840 52203; per hour €2.50; 🕒 10am-1am), just by the entrance to the main square.

Sights & Activities

Naousa's **Byzantine museum** (admission €1.80; ☎ 11am-1.30pm & 7-9pm Tue, Thu, Sat & Sun) is housed in the blue-domed church, about 200m uphill from the central square on the main road to Parikia. A small **folklore museum** (☎ 22840 52284; admission €1.80; ☎ 9am-1pm & 6-9pm), which focuses on regional costumes, can be reached by heading inland from the main square to another blue-domed church. Turn right behind the church.

The best beaches in the area are **Kolymvithres**, which has interesting rock formations; and **Monastiri**, which has some good snorkelling and a clubbing venue. Low-key **Lageri** is also worth seeking out. **Santa Maria**, on the other side of the eastern headland, is good for windsurfing. They can all be reached by road, but caïques go from Naousa to each of them during July and August.

Kokou Riding Centre (☎ 22840 51818) has morning (€45), evening (€30) and one-hour (€25) horse rides, and can arrange pick-up from Naousa's main square for a small charge. The rides explore the surrounding countryside and coast of the area.

Tours

Naousa Paros Sailing Center (☎ 22840 52646; sailing@par.forthnet.gr) offers sailing tours to Naxos, Delos or Iraklia. A full day is €90 per person and departs at 10am. Half-day tours and yacht charters are also available.

Sleeping

There are two camping grounds, both with minibuses that meet ferries. Visit the Naousa Information booth (p397) for help with finding accommodation.

Camping Naousa (☎ 22840 51595; camp sites per adult/child/tent €7/4/4) This pleasant camping ground is at Kolimvithres. It has a small taverna and lovely bays nearby.

Surfing Beach (☎ 22840 52491; fax 22840 51937; info@surfbeach.gr; camp sites per adult/tent €7.50/3.60) A fairly large site, but with reasonable facilities and a good location at Santa Maria. The site has a windsurfing and water-skiing school.

Young Inn (☎ 6976415232; www.young-inn.com; dm €15-20, d/tr €60/60; ☎ ☎ ☎) This cheerful, well-run place caters for a young, international clientele and organises events and outings. Scooter rental can be arranged. Breakfasts start at €3. It's located to the east of the harbour, behind Naousa's cathedral.

Hotel Galini (☎ 22840 51210; fax 22840 51949; s/d €50/60) Opposite the blue-domed local church (Byzantine museum), on the main road into town from Parikia, this charming and friendly little hotel has unfussy rooms that are being steadily updated.

Hotel Stella (☎ 22840 51317; www.hotelstella.gr; s/d €45/65) Deep in the heart of the old town and within a leafy, colourful garden, this friendly hotel has excellent rooms and good facilities. It's best reached by heading up the main street, turning left at the National Bank, going beneath an archway, and then turning right and up past a small church.

our pick **Katerina's Rooms** (☎ 22840 51642; www.katerinastudios.gr; s/d/tr €60/75/90, studio €120; ☎ ☎) Unbeatable views make these immaculate rooms (complete with tea- and coffee-making facilities) an excellent choice. You need to hike uphill a touch, but it's all worth it and the welcome is friendly. Prices drop substantially in low season.

Eating & Drinking

our pick **Moshonas** (☎ 22840 51623; dishes €4.50-9) Located alongside several harbourside tavernas is this long-standing favourite *ouzerie* (place that serves ouzo and light snacks). It's right on the edge of the harbour, and you're likely to see the family's own caïques tie up and deliver the fresh octopus that will soon be on your plate. Seafood is by the kilogram.

Glaftos (☎ 22840 52100; mains €6.50-12) There's a great beachside terrace at this little place, where you can enjoy some mouthwatering seafood dishes such as shrimps and *manouri*, and scallops in a tasty cream sauce.

Perivolaria (☎ 22840 51598; dishes €6.50-19) Relax in this long-established restaurant's garden and sample first-class Greek and international cuisine, including delicious pizzas and pastas. It is reached along the river road from the main square.

Christos (☎ 22840 51442; dishes €12-24; ☎ 7pm-1am Apr-Oct) A leafy canopy of vines adds style to the lovely courtyard dining area of Christos', which is enhanced even more by the paintings that line the walls. The food matches the attentive service and is modern Mediterranean with exquisite touches, all backed by a superb wine list. To get here, head up the main street, and it's on the left after about 50m.

Along the beachfront beyond the harbour, there's a developing fringe of cafés and music bars with cool lounge décor worthy of

Mykonos. Places like **Fotis** (☎ 6938735017) and **Briki** (☎ 22840 52652) spill out onto little beaches and play a mix of classical strands by day and jazzier, funkier sounds by night.

AROUND PAROS

Lefkes Λεύκες

Lovely Lefkes clings to a natural amphitheatre amid hills whose summits are dotted with old windmills. Siesta is taken seriously here and the village has a general air of serenity. It lies 9km southeast of Parikia, high among the hills, and was capital of Paros during the Middle Ages. The village's main attractions are its pristine alleyways and buildings. The **Cathedral of Agia Triada** is an impressive building that's shaded by olive trees.

From the central square, a signpost points to a well-preserved Byzantine path, which leads in 3km to the village of **Prodomos**. At the edge of the village, keep left at a junction (signposted) with a wider track. Sections of the route retain their original paving.

Down on the coast is the attractive harbour and low-key resort of **Piso Livadi**, where there is a pleasant beach. **Perantinos Travel & Tourism** (☎ 22840 41135; perantin@otenet.gr) can arrange accommodation, car rental and boat trips to other islands. There is an ATM next to Perantinos.

Beaches

There is a fair scattering of beaches around the island's coastline, including a good one at **Krios**, accessible by water taxi (return €4) from Parikia. Paros' top beach, **Hrysi Akti** (Golden Beach), on the southeast coast, is hardly spectacular, but it has good sand and several tavernas, and is popular with windsurfers.

There is a decent enough beach at **Aliki** on the south coast.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

The straits between Paros and Antiparos are especially suited to windsurfing and the spectacular sport of kiteboarding – effectively windsurfing in midair.

Down the coast at Pounda, **Eurodivers Club** (☎ 22840 92071; www.eurodivers.gr; Pounda) offers an impressive range of diving courses and dives for all levels and interests. A PADI open-water certification course costs €410, all inclusive.

Paros Kite Pro Centre (☎ 22840 92229; www.paroskite-procenter.com), well run by the same team as Eurodivers Club, offers a range of courses.

These include an introductory one-hour kiteboarding session for €50, while more-intensive courses start at €220 for four to six hours.

Eurodivers and Paros Kite also run a useful mixed activities day that includes diving, kiteboarding, discovering scuba, snorkelling and a boat cruise, for €65.

At Golden Beach (Hrysi Akti), **Aegean Diving College** (☎ 22840 43347, 6932289649; www.aegeandiving.gr) offers a range of dives of archaeological and ecological interest led by scientists and experienced professional divers. A 'discover scuba' dive costs €75, and PADI open-water certification is €450.

Octopus Sea Trips (☎ 6932757123; www.octopusseatrips.com), based at Golden Beach and affiliated with Aegean Diving College, offers marine environmental courses and activities with snorkelling and diving for families and children.

Fanatic Fun Centre (☎ 6938307671; www.fanatic-paros.com; Hrysi Akti) offers catamaran sailing, water-skiing and windsurfing. One-hour windsurfing instruction costs €23 and a two-hour kiteboarding course is €75.

SLEEPING & EATING

Piso Livadi has a number of modern rooms and apartments and a few decent tavernas, and there's a camping ground on the outskirts of town.

our pick **Anna's Studios** (☎ 22840 41320; www.annasinn.com; Piso Livadi; s/d €50/65, studios €70-90; ☎ ☎ ☎) Located on the harbourfront at Piso Livadi, these rooms and studios are bright and immaculate and have tea- and coffee-making facilities. The family owners are charming. The studios are a little way out of the harbour area.

Halaris Taverna (☎ 22840 43257; mains €4.50-9) There are a number of tavernas and cafés on the waterfront at Piso Livadi, but Halaris is a great choice. There's fresh fish available from the family's own boat and a fish plate costs €8, while the shrimp pies are delicious. Other treats range from zucchini croquettes to homemade cheese and spinach pies.

Thea (☎ 22840 91220, 6945751015; dishes €9-14) With a waterside location near the Antiparos ferry quay at Pounda, echoes of old Greece and Asia Minor hang in the air at this great restaurant. Mains include Cappadocian lamb with apricots, or beef with quinces, rice and plums. There are over 450 different vintages kept in a wine room – cum-bar, which even has

a glass floor with bottles nestling beneath your feet.

ENTERTAINMENT

Punda Beach Club (☎ 22840 41717; www.pundabeach.gr) This all-day clubbing venue, at Viva Punda, is a huge complex with swimming pools, bars, restaurants, a gym, live-music shows and a relentlessly crowded beach scene.

ANTIPAROS ΑΝΤΙΠΑΡΟΣ

pop 1037

You'll feel you're escaping from the mainstream on this delightful island, which is rightly proud of its distinctiveness and of its independence from Paros; forget this at your peril in front of local people. The main village and port (also called Antiparos) is a bright and friendly place. There's a touristy gloss round the waterfront and main streets, but the village runs deep inland to quiet squares and alleyways that give way suddenly to open fields.

Getting There & Away

In summer, frequent excursion boats depart for Antiparos from Parikia.

There is also a half-hourly car ferry that runs from Pounta on the west coast of Paros to Antiparos (one way €0.70, per car €7, per scooter €1.80, 10 minutes); the first ferry departs for Antiparos at around 7.15am and the last boat returning leaves Antiparos at 12.30am.

Getting Around

The only bus service on Antiparos runs, in summer, to the cave in the centre of the island (€1.20). The bus continues to Soros and Agios Georgios.

Orientation & Information

Keep going straight ahead from the ferry quay and along the waterfront. Midway, the main street, Agora, strikes inland by Anargyros restaurant.

Halfway up the main street are an Emporiki Bank and National Bank of Greece, both with ATMs. The post office is also here. The central square is reached by turning left at the

top of the main street and then right, behind Smiles Cafe.

To reach the *kaastro*, another Venetian creation, go under the stone arch that leads north off the central square.

The rest of the island runs to the south of the main settlement through quiet countryside. There are several decent beaches, especially at Glyfa and Soros on the east coast.

There are several travel agencies, including **Antiparos Travel Agency** (☎ 22840 61300; ☎ Jun–mid-Oct) by the waterfront, which can help you with your accommodation needs. **Blue Island Divers** (☎ 22840 61493; www.blueisland-divers.gr) can also arrange accommodation and car hire.

Sights

Despite previous looting of stalactites and stalagmites, the **Cave of Antiparos** (admission €3.50; ☎ 10.45am–3.45pm summer) is still awe-inspiring. It is 8km south of the port. Follow the coast road south until you reach a signed turn-off into the hills. There are tours every hour.

From the port there are hourly buses to the cave (one way €1.20).

Activities

On the main pedestrian thoroughfare of town, with a gear and clothes shop attached, **Blue Island Divers** (☎ 22840 61493; www.blueisland-divers.gr) is friendly and helpful, and has a wide range of dive options. The owners have a great knowledge of the Antiparos scene. Accommodation and car rental can also be arranged. A four-day PADI open-water course is €380 and an advanced course is €320. A 'discover scuba diving' day session is €45. Trips can be tailored to suit individual wishes and there are advanced courses available.

Tours

MSthiella (☎ 22840 61028) runs tours around the island daily, stopping at several beaches. The price (adults €40, children €20) covers barbeque and drinks; you can book at Antiparos Travel Agency (above).

Sleeping

Camping Antiparos (☎ 22840 61221; camp sites per adult/child/tent €6/4/4) This pleasant beachside camping ground is planted with bamboo and cedars and is 1.5km north of the port. It has a minimarket, bar and restaurant. A site bus picks up from the port.

Anarghyros (☎ 22840 61204; mak@par.forthnet.gr; s/d €35/50; ☎) There's good value at this well-kept family-run hotel on the waterfront, where rooms are a decent size and come with tea- and coffee-making facilities. Attached to the hotel is a decent restaurant offering standard Greek dishes from €5 to €9.

Hotel Mantalena (☎ 22840 61206; www.hotelmantalena.gr; s/d/tr €50/65/75; ☎) The recently refurbished Mantalena has bright, clean rooms and is located a short distance to the north of the main harbour quay. There's a pleasant terrace and the building is set back from the harbour road.

Eating & Drinking

The main street of Antiparos has several cafés and tavernas serving Greek staples and fish dishes.

Maki's (☎ 22840 61616; dishes €4.50–10) Seafood is the speciality at this harbourfront taverna. It's generally excellent, from the prawn *souvlaki* with calamari to lobster (when available).

Yam Bar Restaurant and Cocktail Bar (dishes €6–9; ☎ 8pm–4am mid-Jun–mid-Sep) You can enjoy salads and delicious cold plates of chicken or pasta at this relaxing spot, with views of the sea. Sounds are a general mix that includes Latin and house and occasional jazz. It's signposted left off the top end of Market St.

Soul Sugar is along to the right from the top of the main street. It plays funk, disco and house into the small hours, and serves great cocktails.

NAXOS ΝΑΞΟΣ

pop 18,188

It was on Naxos that an ungrateful Theseus is said to have abandoned Ariadne after she helped him escape the Cretan labyrinth. In keeping with even mythic soap opera, she didn't pine long, and was soon entwined with Dionysos, the god of wine and ecstasy and the island's favourite deity. Naxian wine has long been considered a fine antidote for a broken heart.

The island was a cultural centre of classical Greece and of Byzantium. Venetian and Frankish influences have left their mark.

Naxos is more fertile than most of the other islands and produces olives, grapes, figs, citrus fruit, corn and potatoes. Mt Zeus (1004m; also known as Mt Zas or Zefs) is the Cyclades' high-

est peak and is the central focus of the island's mountainous interior, in which you find enchanting villages such as Halki and Apiranthos. There are numerous fine beaches and the island is a wonderful place to explore on foot, as many old paths between villages, churches and other sights still survive. There are a number of walking guides and maps, including the useful *Central Naxos – A Guide with Map* (€8), available from local bookshops.

Getting There & Away

AIR

There is at least one flight daily and two on Sunday to Athens (€58, 45 minutes). Olympic Airlines is represented by **Naxos Tours** (☎ 22850 22095; naxostours@naxos-island.com), on the waterfront, which also sells ferry tickets.

FAST BOAT & CATAMARAN

There are at least two catamarans daily to Paros (€13.50, 45 minutes), Mykonos (€19.50, 1½ hours) and Piraeus (€51, four hours). There are also daily services to Ios (€20.20, 50 minutes), Santorini (€23.60, 1½ hours) and Iraklio on Crete (€40.90, 3¼ hours), and four weekly to Tinos (€20, 1½ hours) and Syros (€21, 1¼ hours).

FERRY

There are price differences of about €1 to €3 between ferry companies whose vessels operate on the same ferry route. The more-expensive price is given here.

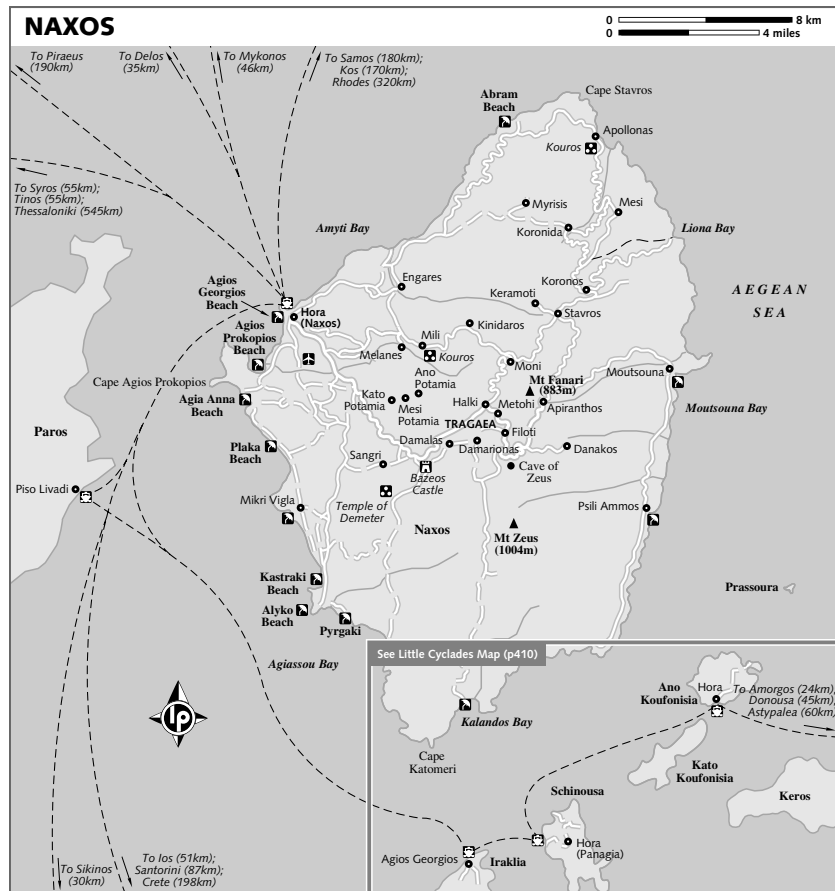
Naxos has around six ferry connections daily with Piraeus (€29, five hours), Paros (€7, one hour), Ios (€11.50, 1¼ hours) and Santorini (€15.50, three hours), as well as four daily with Mykonos (€7.70, three hours).

There is one daily boat to Tinos (€7.80, 4¼ hours), Syros (€11.50, three hours), Iraklia (€7, one hour), Schinoussa (€7.50, 1¼ hours), Koufonisia (€9, two hours), Amorgos (€14, 2½ hours), Donousa (€9, one to four hours) and Ikaria (€12.20, 1½ hours).

There are five ferries weekly to Anafi (€13.60, seven hours).

There are two boats weekly to Astypalea (€23, 5½ hours), Sikinos (€6.30, 3½ hours) and Folegandros (€9.30, 2½ hours).

One ferry goes weekly to Kythnos (€14.80, seven hours), Kea (€14.40, 8¼ hours), Lavrio (€18.50, 10 hours), Thessaloniki (€36.30, 15 hours), Rhodes (€23, 14 hours), Kos (€16, 8¼ hours) and Iraklio (€19.50, seven hours).



Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

The airport is 3km south of Hora. There is no shuttle bus, but buses to Agios Prokopios Beach and Agia Anna pass close by. A taxi costs €12 to €15 depending on the time of day and if booked.

BUS

Frequent buses run to Agia Anna (€1.40) from Hora. Five buses daily serve Filoti (€1.80) via Halki (€1.40); four serve Apiranthos (€2.60) via Filoti and Halki; and at least three serve Apollonas (€4.30), Pyrgaki (€2.20) and Melanes (€1.40). There are less-frequent departures to other villages.

Buses leave from the end of the ferry quay in Hora; timetables are posted outside the bus information office.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

In August you can hire cars from about €45 to €55 per day, and motorcycles from about €20. **Rental Center** (☎ 22850 23395; Plateia Evripeou) is a good bet.

HORA (NAXOS) ΧΩΡΑ (ΝΑΞΟΣ)

pop 6533

Busy Hora, on the west coast of Naxos, is the island's port and capital. It's a large town, divided into two historic neighbourhoods – Bourgos, where the Greeks lived,

and the hilltop Kastro, where the Venetian Catholics lived.

Orientation

The ferry quay is at the northern end of the waterfront, with the bus station at its inland end. The broad waterfront, Protopapadaki, known universally as Paralia, leads off to the south from the ferry quay and is lined with cafés, tavernas and shops on its inland side. Behind Paralia, narrow alleyways twist and turn beneath archways as they climb into the Kastro.

A northerly turn at the end of the ferry quay leads to a causeway over to Palatia Islet and the unfinished Temple of Apollo, Naxos' most famous landmark, known as the Portara. There is not much else to see at the temple other than the two columns and their crowning lintel surrounded by fallen masonry.

There are a few swimming spots along the waterfront promenade below the temple. Southwest of the town is the pleasant, but busy, beach of Agios Georgios.

Information

BOOKSHOPS

Zoom (☎ 22850 23675; Paralia) A large, well-stocked newsagent and bookshop that has most international newspapers and one of the biggest selections of books, in various languages, in the entire Cyclades.

EMERGENCY

Police station (☎ 22850 22100; Paparrigopoulou)

Southeast of Plateia Protodikiou.

Port police (☎ 22850 22300) Just south of the quay.

INTERNET ACCESS

Rental Center (☎ 22850 23395; Plateia Evripeou; per hr €3)

Zas Travel (☎ 22850 23330; fax 22850 23419; Paralia; per hr €4)

LAUNDRY

To Ariston (☎ 22850 26750; 5kg wash & dry €10; ☎ 8am-2pm & 5.30-9pm Mon, Tue, Thu & Fri, 8am-2pm Wed & Sat)

MEDICAL SERVICES

Medical Centre (☎ 22850 23550; Prantouna)

MONEY

All the following banks have ATMs. There's also a National Bank of Greece ATM outside

the Naxos Tourist Information Centre (see Tourist Information, below).

Agricultural Bank of Greece (Paralia)

Alpha Bank (cnr Paralia & Papavasiliou)

National Bank of Greece (Paralia)

POST

Post office (Agios Georgiou) Go past the OTE, across Papavasiliou, and left at the forked road.

TELEPHONE

OTE (telecommunications office; Paralia) Has several phone kiosks in an alleyway.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Naxos Tourist Information Centre (NTIC; ☎ 22850 25201, emergency 22850 24525; apollon-hotel@naxos-island.com) There is no official tourist information centre on Naxos, but this privately owned office, directly opposite the main ferry quay, can arrange accommodation, excursions, rental cars and laundry service; luggage storage is also available (€1.50). The NTIC does not sell ferry tickets.

TRAVEL AGENCIES

Naxos Tours and Zas Travel both sell ferry tickets and organise accommodation, tours and rental cars.

Naxos Tours (☎ 22850 22095; www.naxostours.net; Paralia)

Zas Travel (☎ 22850 23330; zas-travel@nax.forthnet.gr; Paralia)

Sights

To see the Bourgos area, head into the winding backstreets behind the northern end of Paralia. The most alluring part of Hora is the residential **Kastro**. Marco Sanudo made the town the capital of his duchy in 1207, and several Venetian mansions survive. Take a stroll around the Kastro during siesta to experience its hushed, timeless atmosphere.

A short distance behind the northern end of the waterfront are several churches and chapels, and the **Mitropolis Museum** (☎ 22850 24151; Kondyli; admission free; ☎ 8.30am-3pm). The museum features fragments of a Mycenaean city of the 13th to 11th centuries BC that was abandoned because of the threat of flooding by the sea. It's a haunting place where glass panels underfoot reveal ancient foundations and larger areas of excavated buildings.

The **archaeological museum** (☎ 22850 22725; admission €3; ☎ 8.30am-3pm Tue-Sun) is in Kastro, housed in the former Jesuit school where novelist Nikos Kazantzakis was briefly a

HORA (NAXOS)

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pupil. The contents include Hellenistic and Roman terracotta figurines and some early Cycladic figurines.

Close by, the **Della Rocca-Barozzi Venetian Museum** (☎ 22850 22387; guided tours adult/student €5/3; 🕒 10am-3pm & 7-10pm end May-mid-Sep), a handsome old tower house of the 13th century, is within the Kastro ramparts (by the northwest gate). A visit takes you into the fascinating world of the historic Kastro and its Frankish and Venetian past. There are changing art exhibitions in the vaults. Tours are multilingual. The museum also runs **tours** (adult/student €15/10) of the Kastro at 11am from Tuesday to Sunday; tours last just over two hours. Evening concerts and other events are staged in the grounds of the museum (see p407). The **Roman Catholic cathedral** (🕒 6.30pm-8.30pm), also in the Kastro, is worth visiting.

Activities

Flivos Sport Club (☎ 22850 24308; www.flivos-sportclub.com; Agios Georgios) offers a range of windsurfing options, starting with a beginner's course of six hours for €160, or a four-hour Hobie Cat sailing course for €95. The club also organises walking trips and rents out mountain bikes for €6 to €8 a day.

Naxos Horse Riding (☎ 6948809142) organises daily horse rides (10am to 1pm and 5pm to 8pm), inland and on beaches (per person €45). You can book a ride up until 6pm the day before and can arrange pick-up and return, to and from the stables. Beginners, young children and advanced riders are catered for. Bookings can also be made at the **Naos Silver Gallery** (☎ 22850 24130) in Pigadakia.

Tours

There are frequent excursion boats to Mykonos (€40), Delos (€40) and Santorini (€55); book through travel agents.

Naxos Tourist Information Centre (☎ 22850 25201; emergency 22850 24525; apollon-hotel@naxos-island.com) Offers day tours of the island by bus (€20) or caique (including barbecue, €40). One-day walking tours (per two people €46) are offered three times weekly.

Flivos Sport Club (☎ 22850 24308; www.flivos-sportclub.com; Agios Georgios) You can book a half-day guided mountain-bike tour for €20.

Sleeping

Naxos has a reputation for persistent domatia hawkers meeting ferries. Recently the authorities have cracked down hard, with talk

of heavy fines for badgering of tourists, and in 2007 there was certainly a reduction in the number of hawkers. If you're approached but aren't interested, be firm but polite and keep moving; Hora has plenty of good accommodation options. Booths on the quay have information about hotels and domatia.

BUDGET

Pension Irene II (☎ 22850 23169; www.irenenpension-naxos.com; s/d €30/50; 🕒 📺 📶) Another good choice, Irene II has been refurbished recently. Rooms are bright and comfortable with pleasant balconies. The swimming pool is an irresistible bonus. The same family runs Pension Irene I (☎ 22850 23169; www.irenenpension-naxos.com), a peaceful, well-kept place in leafy surroundings, with air-con rooms for €25/35 a single/double.

Despina's Rooms (☎ 22850 22356; fax 22850 22179; Kastro; s/d €40/50) This cheerful family home is tucked away in the Kastro and has a selection of decent rooms, some with sea views. Rooms on the roof terrace are popular despite their small size. There's a communal kitchen.

There are several camping grounds near Hora, and all have good facilities. Minibuses meet the ferries. The grounds are all handy to good beaches and there's an approximate price per person of €8.

Camping Maragas (☎ 22850 24552) At Agia Anna Beach, south of Hora.

Naxos Camping (☎ 22850 23500; 🕒) About 1km south of Agios Georgios Beach. The camping ground closest to town.

Plaka Camping (☎ 22850 42700; fax 22850 42701) At Plaka Beach, 6km south of town.

MIDRANGE

Hotel Glaros (☎ 22850 23101; www.hotelglaros.com; Agios Georgios; s incl breakfast €55-60, d incl breakfast €75-80; 🕒 📺 📶) The attractive décor of Hotel Glaros captures the colours of sea and sky. Service is friendly and thoughtful and the rooms are bright and clean. Although not on the beach-front, the hotel is only a few steps away from the beach. The owners also have attractive apartments nearby (€65 to €95).

Pension Sofi (☎ 22850 25593; www.pensionsofi.gr; s/d/tw €65/70/90; 🕒) Great hospitality and kindness are the rule at this family-run place. It's just a short distance inland from the port and is framed by one of the biggest bougainvilleas you're likely to see. Rooms are clean and well equipped and include cooking facilities.

Hotel Apollon (☎ 22850 22468, 6976618384; www.apollonhotel-naxos.gr; Fontana; s/d incl breakfast €65/85; P ♻️ 🚰) Stylish décor and tasteful furnishings lend an atmosphere of Naxian good living to the Apollon's spacious, well-furnished rooms. The hotel is in a quiet area a few minutes from the waterfront.

Chateau Zevgoli (☎ 22850 26123; www.naxos.townhotels.com; Kastro Bourgos; s/d €70/80, ste €120; ♻️) The owner of Hotel Apollon also runs this long-established hotel, right in the heart of Kastro. It has a charming garden setting to go with the traditional Naxian style of rooms and furnishings.

our pick Hotel Grotta (☎ 22850 22215; www.hotel.grotta.gr; Grotta; s/d incl breakfast €70/85; P ♻️ 🚰) Located on high ground to the east of the ferry quay, this delightful modern hotel has comfortable and immaculate rooms, great sea views from the front, spacious public areas and a Jacuzzi. It's made even better by the friendly attentive service.

Eating

Naxian cuisine cherishes such local specialties as *kefalotyri* (a hard cheese made from sheep's milk), honey, *kitron* (a liqueur made from the leaves of the citron tree – see opposite), *raki* (Greek firewater, smoother than *tsipouro*), ouzo and fine white wine.

Maro's (☎ 22850 25113; Paparrigopoulou; mains €4-8) Maro's popularity with locals says everything, and there's a sense that good cooking is important here. Dishes such as cod in garlic sauce and roast pork with spaghetti are all the more tasty for it.

Meze 2 (☎ 22850 26401; Paralia; mains €3-9) The emphasis at this popular *mezedhopoleio* (restaurant specialising in *mezedhes*) is on fish, and even the local fishermen eat here. Superb seafood is prepared and served by family members in an atmosphere that is never less than sociable.

Irimi's (☎ 22850 26780; Paralia; mains €5.50-9.50) The real deal at this pleasant taverna is the terrific selection of starters (€4 to €7.50) – such as delicious codfish croquettes – from which you can construct a delicious meal.

our pick Picasso Mexican Bistro (☎ 22850 25408; Odos Komiakis; dishes €5.25-12.75; ♻️ 7pm-late) The fajitas at this great Tex-Mex place are world class. Tables fill quickly with aficionados of tacos, nachos, burritos and fajitas. It also does great salads as well as hefty 'buffalo steaks'. There's a beach version, Picasso on

the Beach, at Plaka Beach, open mid-June to September.

East West Asian Restaurant (☎ 22850 24641; dishes €5.60-13) At this excellent eatery there's always a friendly welcome to go with the Thai, Chinese or Indian favourites, including green chicken coconut curry, made with chunks of tender chicken and vegetables. You'll find this place off Agiou Arseniou.

Also recommended (charging about €4 to €9 for a main dish):

Taverna Koutouki (Kastro) Famous for its outside tables in a narrow alleyway on the way up to Kastro.

Popi's Grill (Paralia) The best place for *souvlaki*.

Near the Zoom newsagent and bookshop is the town's best bakery. Next door is the Zoom Minimarket. The cheapest supermarkets are Atlantic and Vidalis, both a little way out of town on the ring road.

Drinking

BARs

our pick On the Rocks (☎ 22850 29224; Pigadakia) The place to go for character and cocktails. Enjoy Havana cigars or a flavourful *sheesha* (water pipe) with Cuban-style daiquiris or tequila, or try the *karpouzi* bowl for two – fresh watermelon with a vodka base. It all goes well with sounds that vary between funk, house and electronic. Occasional live performances and karaoke stir the mix. There's also internet and wi-fi available.

Lemon (☎ 22850 24734; Paralia) A cool cocktail bar and café with relaxing décor, Lemon is one of the best places from which to watch the world go by.

Jam (Pigadakia) A huge playlist with rock and standard favourites is the background to this long-established music bar. There's also a great list of cocktails.

Entertainment

CINEMAS

Cine Astra (☎ 22850 25381; Andreas Papandreou; adult/child €8/5) About a five-minute walk from the main square. It shows newly released mainstream films and has a bar. Sessions are from 9pm and 11pm.

NIGHTCLUBS

Abyss (Grotta; admission €10; ♻️ 11.30pm-3am May-mid-Sep, 11.30pm-late Fri & Sat mid-Sep-Apr) Previously known as Super Island, this place has had something of a makeover inside and out, but

offers much the same sounds with house and modern Greek at the fore.

Ocean (☎ 22850 26766; Seafont; admission €10; ♻️ 11.30pm-3am May-mid-Sep, 11.30pm-late Fri & Sat mid-Sep-Apr) A sizable space features house and some modern Greek music, and runs special nights with guest DJs.

SUNSET CONCERTS

Della Rocca-Barozzi Venetian Museum (☎ 22850 22387; Kastro; events admission €15-20; ♻️ 8pm Wed-Sun Apr-Oct) Special evening cultural events are held at the museum, and comprise traditional music and dance concerts, and classical and contemporary music recitals. Prices depend on seat position.

Shopping

Takis' Shop (☎ 22850 23045; Plateia Mandilara) Among the splendid wines here are such fine names as Lazaridis from Northern Greece, Tslepos from the Peloponnese and Manousakis from Crete – all masterful vintages. You can also find Vallindras *kitron* (see p408) and ouzo here. Adjoining is Takis' jewellery shop, where fine individual pieces from some of Greece's most famous designers often reflect ancient designs and the imagery of the sea.

Antico Veneziano (☎ 22850 26206; Kastro) Deep within Kastro is this upmarket antique store and gallery that makes for a fascinating visit.

In the streets heading up to the Kastro there are several shops selling fine embroidery and handmade silver jewellery.

AROUND NAXOS Beaches

Conveniently located just south of the town's waterfront is **Agios Georgios**, Naxos' town beach. It's backed by hotels and tavernas at the town end and can get very crowded, but it runs for some way to the south and its shallow waters mean the beach is safe for youngsters.

The next beach south of Agios Georgios is **Agios Prokopios**, in a sheltered bay to the south of the headland of Cape Mougkri. It merges with **Agia Anna**, a stretch of shining white sand, quite narrow but long enough to feel uncrowded towards its southern end. Development is fairly solid at Prokopios and the northern end of Agia Anna.

Sandy beaches continue down as far as **Pyr-gaki** and include **Plaka**, **Kastraki** and **Alyko**.

One of the best of the southern beaches is **Mikri Vigla** – its name translates as 'little look-

out', a watching place for pirates, and reference to the rocky headland, all golden granite slabs and boulders, between superb beaches. The settlement here is a little scattered and is punctuated by half-finished buildings in places, but there's a sense of escapism and open space.

There are hotels, domatia and tavernas near most beaches. An excellent, out of the way option is **Oasis Studios** (☎ 22850 75494; www.oasisnaxos.gr; s/d €60/75; P ♻️ 🚰) at Mikri Vigla. It is close to the beach and has lovely big rooms with kitchens. The owner and staff are friendly and helpful, and there's an outside terrace with a swimming pool and bar. The owner is a font of local information and can help arrange horse riding, windsurfing and kiteboarding on the nearby beaches.

The beachside **Taverna Liofago** (☎ 22850 75214, 6937137737; dishes €3.50-7) has a dreamy beach location. It has been in business for decades and offers a terrific variety of dishes with special Naxian flavour. The *keftedhakia* (meatballs) are a delicious speciality.

Tragaea Τραγαια

The Tragaea region is a vast plain of olive groves and unspoilt villages, couched beneath the central mountains. **Filoti**, on the slopes of Mt Zeus, or Zas (1004m), is the region's largest village. It has an ATM booth, accessed with card, just down from the main bus stop. On the outskirts of the village (coming from Hora), an asphalt road leads off right to the isolated hamlets of **Damarionas** and **Damalas**.

From Filoti, you can also reach the **Cave of Zeus (Zas)**, a large natural cavern at the foot of a cliff on the slopes of Mt Zeus. There's a junction signposted Aria Spring and Zas Cave, about 800m south of Filoti. If travelling by bus, ask to be dropped off here. The side road ends in 1.2km. From the road-end parking, follow a walled path past the **Aria Spring**, a fountain and picnic area, and continue uphill to reach the cave. The path leads on from here to the summit of Zas. It's quite a stiff hike of about 3km. A good way to return to Filoti, taking another 4km, is to follow the path that leads north from the summit. This is not a mere stroll, so be fit and come equipped with good footwear, water and sunscreen.

HALKI XAAKEIO

One of Naxos' finest experiences is a visit to the historic village of **Halki**, which lies at the

ART OF THE AEGEAN: L'OLIVIER, NAXOS *Des Hannigan*

The first time I walked into **L'Olivier** (☎ 22850 32829; www.fish-olive-creations.com), a ceramics gallery and shop in the little village of Halki on Naxos, it was late evening, early summer. The velvety dusk of the Tragaea, the mountain basin of Naxos, had settled like a veil on Halki's little village square. Young owls hooted from marble ledges on the façades of old Naxian mansions. The air was sweet with the scent of nearby olive groves and meadows. Inside L'Olivier it was as if the sunset glow had lingered. Even the artificial lighting was subtly deployed. Everywhere I looked were pieces of stoneware ceramics and jewellery that took my breath away.

Each piece of work seemed unique. Yet all reflected the ancient Mediterranean themes of fish and olive that are at the heart of the work of Naxian potter Katharina Bolesch and her partner, artist and craftsman Alexander Reichardt. Three-dimensional ceramic olives framed the edges of shining plates or tumbled down the side of elegant jugs and bowls. Grapes too, hung in little ceramic bunches. Painted shoals of fish darted across platters and swam around bowls and dishes. Ceramic and silver fish jewellery extended the theme. Those first impressions have never faded. Each time I walk into L'Olivier now, the world lights up.

Katharina Bolesch was partly brought up on Naxos and is rooted in the island's landscape and culture. Her major inspiration is the olive and its symbolism. Her work has been exhibited in major European galleries and in Athens' Goulandris Natural History Museum and the Academy of Athens and in New York. Her work will also feature as an official exhibit in Beijing during the 2008 Olympics. Reichardt is entirely of the Mediterranean. His life among islands and his long experience as a diver inspire his painted fish motifs, his ceramic and silver fish jewellery and his work in wood and marble.

L'Olivier has gathered many admirers worldwide. The president of the Goulandris Natural History Museum and a past European Woman of the Year, Mrs Niki Goulandris, is a longstanding patron. She speaks enthusiastically of the work of Bolesch and Reichardt and places it within the world of classical Greek and Cycladic art while recognising its modern context.

'Their work represents boldness and commitment to tradition,' she says. 'Their motifs are emphatically the symbols of the Greek land and sea.'

In spite of such a high profile and a developing international reputation, the work of Bolesch and Reichardt remains entirely accessible and affordable. L'Olivier is a cornucopia of beautiful yet functional work that includes tiny ceramic fish and silver jewellery, simple tiles and dishes, large jugs and bowls of luminous beauty, fine artefacts in olive wood, and olive products such as oil and soap.

In 2006 Bolesch and Reichardt opened a separate gallery and workshop just around the corner from their shop. Here they stage exhibitions by accomplished artists in a building that has been designed with great style and that fits perfectly amid Halki's traditional Naxian façades and the serene beauty of the Tragaea.

heart of the Tragaea, about 20 minutes' drive from Naxos town. Halki is a vivid reflection of historic Naxos and is full of the handsome façades of old villas and tower houses, legacy of a rich past as the one-time centre of Naxian commerce.

The main road skirts Halki. There is some roadside parking but you may find more at the schoolyard at the north end of the village and on a piece of rough ground just beyond the school. Lanes lead off the main road to the beautiful little square at the heart of the village.

Since the late 19th century Halki has had strong connections with the production of

kitron, a delicious liqueur. The citron (*Citrus medica*) was introduced to the Mediterranean area in about 300 BC and thrived on Naxos for centuries. The fruit is barely edible in its raw state, but its rind tastes delicious when preserved in syrup as a *ghlika kutalyu* (spoon sweet). *Kitroraki*, a *raki*, can be distilled from grape skins and citron leaves, and by the late 19th century the preserved fruit and a sweet version of *kitroraki*, known as *kitron*, were being exported in large amounts from Naxos.

The **Vallindras Distillery** (☎ 22850 31220; ☎ 10am-11pm Jul-Aug, 10am-6pm May-Jun & Sep-Oct) in Halki's main square, still distils *kitron* the

old-fashioned way. There are free tours of the old distillery's atmospheric rooms, which still contain ancient jars and copper stills. *Kitron* tastings round off the trip and a selection of the distillery's products are on sale. To arrange a tour during the period November to April you need to phone ☎ 22850 22534 or ☎ 6942551161.

Another Halki treat is the ceramics shop **L'Olivier** and its nearby gallery (see boxed text, opposite), and the fascinating shop **Era** (☎ 22859 31009; eraproducts@mail.gr), where delicious marmalade, jam and spoon desserts are made and sold.

There are sleeping possibilities in Halki, but at present it's rather informal. Your best bet is to ask locally. Filoti has some decent, cheap rooms, but you're really best off asking at the village tavernas by the main bus stop.

In a classic location in the heart of Halki's central square, **Vianni's Taverna** (☎ 22850 31214; dishes €5.50-7.50) is well known for its good local meat dishes and delicious fresh salads with *myzithra* (sheep's-milk cheese).

The **Citron Café** (☎ 22850 31602) is next to the Vallindras Distillery and is a charming place that has retained the traditional style of old Halki.

An alternative scenic route from Hora to Halki is along the road that passes **Ano Potamia**. It's here that you'll find **Taverna Pigi** (☎ 22850 32292; mains €4.50-7), known for excellent local cooking, enjoyed with the serene music of the gurgling spring that the taverna is named after.

Panagia Drosiani Παναγία Δροσιανή

The **Panagia Drosiani** (☎ 10am-7pm May-mid-Oct) just below **Moni**, 2.5km north of Halki, is one of the oldest and most revered churches in Greece. It has a warren of cavelike chapels, and several of the frescoes date back to the 7th century. Donations are appreciated.

Sangri Σαγκρί

The handsome towerlike building of **Bazeos Castle** (☎ 22850 31402; ☎ 10am-5pm & 6-9pm) stands prominently in the landscape about 2km east of the village of Sangri. The castle was built in its original form as the Monastery of Timios Stavros (True Cross) during the 17th century, but monks abandoned the site in the early 19th century. It was later bought by the Bazeos family, whose modern descendants have refurbished the building and its fascinating late-

medieval rooms with great skill and imagination. The castle now functions as a cultural centre and stages art exhibitions and the annual **Naxos Festival** during July and August, when concerts, plays and literary readings are held. The price of admission to these varies.

About 1.5km south of Sangri is the impressive **Temple to Demeter** (Dimitra's Temple; ☎ 22850 22725; ☎ 8.30am-3pm Tue-Sun). The ruins and reconstructions are not large, but they are historically fascinating, and the hilltop location is impressive. There is a site **museum** with some fine reconstructions of temple features. Signs point the way from Sangri.

Apiranthos Απειρανθος

Apiranthos is an atmospheric mountain village of unadorned stone houses, marble-paved streets and alleyways that scramble up the slopes of Mt Fanari. Its inhabitants are descendants of refugees who fled Crete to escape Turkish repression; they retain a strong individuality and a rich dialect, and the village has always been noted for its spirited politics and populism. The village has an impressive trio of museums.

On the main road, to the right of the start of the village's main street, is the **museum of natural history** (admission €3; ☎ 8.30am-2pm Tue-Sun). The **geology museum** (admission €3; ☎ 8.30am-2pm Tue-Sun) and the **archaeology museum** (admission free; ☎ 8.30am-2pm Tue-Sun) are part-way along the main street. The latter has a marvellous collection of small Cycladic artefacts. The museums are notionally open from 7pm to 10pm in summer, but all the opening times stated here are 'flexible', in keeping with an admirable local spirit of independence.

Just before the main square, which is dominated by a huge plane tree, is **Stoy Lefteris** (☎ 22850 61333; dishes €8-15), with reliable local dishes in a peaceful terrace garden overlooking the valley.

There is parking at the entrance to Apiranthos, on the main Hora-Apollonas road.

Moutsouna Μουτσούνα

The road from Apiranthos to Moutsouna descends in an exhilarating series of S-bends through spectacular mountain scenery. Formerly a busy port that shipped out the emery mined in the region, Moutsouna is now a quiet place, although there is some development. Seven kilometres south of the village is a good beach at **Psili Ammos**.

There are a few pensions and tavernas, mainly in Moutsouna, but some are scattered along the coast road.

Apollonas Απόλλωνας

Tavernas line the waterfront adjoining a reasonable beach at Apollonas, on the north coast, but the main attraction here is a giant 7th-century BC **kouros**, which lies in an ancient quarry in the hillside above the village. It is signposted to the left as you approach Apollonas on the main inland road from Hora. This 10.5m statue may have been abandoned before being finished, because weaknesses in the stone caused cracking. Apollonas has several domatia and tavernas.

With your own transport you can return to Hora via the west-coast road, passing through wild and sparsely populated country with awe-inspiring sea views. Several tracks branch down to secluded beaches, such as **Abram**.

LITTLE CYCLADES ΜΙΚΡΕΣ ΚΥΚΛΑΔΕΣ

Change down to Cycladic time and head for the chain of small islands between Naxos and Amorgos if you want an authentic island experience. Only four – Donousa, Ano Koufonisia, Iraklia and Schinoussa – have permanent populations. They are densely populated in antiquity, as shown by the large number of ancient graves found on the is-

lands. During the Middle Ages, only wild goats and even wilder pirates inhabited the islands. Post-independence, intrepid souls from Naxos and Amorgos recolonised. Now, the islands welcome growing numbers of independent-minded tourists.

Donousa is the northernmost of the group and the furthest from Naxos. The others are clustered near the southeast coast of Naxos. Each has a public telephone and post agency and there are ATMs on all islands but Iraklia, although you should bring a decent amount of ready cash with you.

Getting There & Away

There are daily connections to and from Naxos to the Little Cyclades but the service can be disrupted when sea conditions are poor; make sure you have plenty of time before committing yourself – these islands are not meant for last-minute visits or for one-night tick lists.

Until about mid-2009, four times a week in summer and twice weekly in winter, Blue Star car ferries run from Piraeus via Naxos to all of the Little Cyclades islands and on to Amorgos and Astypalea. There's a standard price of €27.50 for one passenger to each of the Little Cyclades islands.

The sturdy little ferry **Express Skopelitis** (☎ 22850 71256/519; Katapola, Amorgos) provides a service (daily from mid-June to September, but on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday for the rest of the year, except January) between Naxos and Amorgos via all of

the smaller islands. It's a defining Cycladic experience. Bad weather can blow the schedule. Most seating is open deck, so when it's windy, brace yourself for some real rocking and rolling. In rough weather you'll know what's coming when the crew starts dishing out the *see-through* sick bags. If you're on deck, work out exactly which side of the boat is protected from wind and sea on each section between islands and stay there, or that bracing sea air may become a bracing Aegean Sea deluge. Regardless of sea conditions, locals, the crew and this writer head straight below for the comfy saloon and bar where they become engulfed in cigarette smoke and cheerful chatter. The choice is yours...

In high season the *Skopelitis* leaves Naxos at 3pm each day and calls at Iraklia (€8, 4½ hours), Schinoussa (€7.50, four hours), Koufonisia (€7, 3½ hours), Donousa (€6.50, one hour and 20 minutes) and Amorgos (€10.50, six hours) where it docks overnight at Katapola.

There is also one weekly ferry from Donousa to Syros (€11, nine hours) and four weekly ferries to Paros (€12.50, two to four hours).

A useful weekly link from Donousa to Astypalea (€16, two hours 20 minutes) and the other Dodecanese islands is the rather lumbering *MV Dimitroula* (☎ 22410 87401) – you hear it before you see it. It calls at Donousa on its outward trip from Piraeus to Rhodes via Paros and Naxos on Tuesday, and calls in again on its return trip on Friday.

Four weekly ferries go from Schinoussa to Paros (€10, 2½ hours).

Guaranteed until about mid-2009, the big **Blue Star** (☎ 21089 19800; www.bluestarferries.com) car ferry, *Blue Star Naxos*, will leave Piraeus for Paros, Naxos, all the Little Cyclades, and on to Amorgos, and Astypalea at 5.30pm on Monday and Wednesday all year and additionally on Saturdays from June 10 to September 20. The vessel will reverse the process on Tuesday and Thursday all year and additionally on Sunday from 10 June to 20 September.

A few other large, slow ferries stop at the islands during high season – 'ghost ships' – often in the dead of night.

IRAKLIA ΗΠΑΚΛΕΙΑ

pop 115
Iraklia (ir-a-*klee*-a) dozes in the Aegean sun and is one of the finest switch-off options anywhere in the world. Dump the party gear

and spurn the nightlife, the 'sightseeing' and the dreary souvenirs. Instead, brace yourself for a serene and quiet life and Iraklia will not disappoint. Only in July and August will you have to share the idyll with like-minded others.

Iraklia measures only 19 sq km in area. The port and main village is Agios Georgios. It has an attractive cove-like harbour, complete with a sandy beach. Turn right at the end of the ferry quay, and then go up left for a well-supplied general store, Perigiali Supermarket. Further uphill is a smaller store and *kafeneio* (coffee house) called Melissa's, which is also the ferry ticket office, postal agency and hub of island gossip. There are card phones outside Perigiali Supermarket and Melissa's. There is no ATM, but Perigiali Supermarket will cash cheques with card back-up. The island's website is www.iraklia.gr.

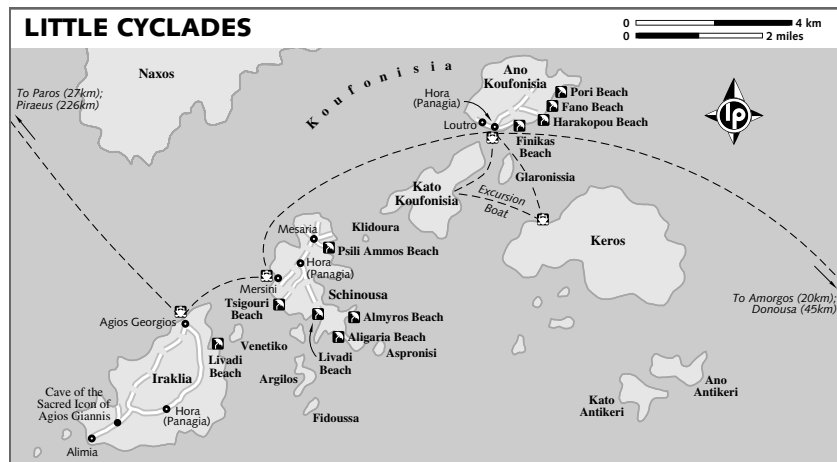
A surfaced road leads off to the left of the ferry quay, and after about 1km you'll reach **Livadi**, the island's best beach. A steep 2.5km further on is Hora (Panagia). Where the road forks at the village entrance, keep to the right for the main street.

The island's major 'sight' is the **Cave of the Sacred Icon of Agios Gianni**. The icon is said to have been discovered in the cave by a shepherd at the end of the 19th century, and is now kept in the little church in Hora village. A yearly **festival** celebrating the icon is held in Hora on the last weekend of August. The cave is above the sea on the island's northern side, and can be reached along a footpath from Hora in about three hours return. Coming uphill from the entrance to the village, the path starts just beyond the church at a signpost on the right. The path is very rocky and steep in places; boots or walking shoes are essential and you should take plenty of water. Beyond the cave the path leads to the beach at **Alimia**, which is also served by boat from Agios Georgios in summer.

During July and August, the *Anemos* ferries people to island beaches and also runs day trips (return €10) to nearby Schinoussa. Enquire at Perigiali Supermarket.

Sleeping & Eating

Domatia and tavernas are concentrated in and around Agios Georgios, although a few open on the beach at Livadi in summer. Domatia owners meet the boats, but in high season it's advisable to book.



our pick Anna's Place (☎ 22850 71145; s/d €35/67; 🚰) Located on high ground above the port, these lovely, airy rooms have stylish furnishings and the front balconies have sweeping views. There's a friendly and helpful welcome that reflects Iraklia's overall style.

Alexandra (☎ 22850 71482; fax 22850 71545; d €45) Also on the hill above the port are these clean, unfussy rooms with pleasant patios.

Other options in the main village:

Melissa (☎ 22850 71539; fax 22850 71561; d €35) Has basic rooms.

Anthi & Angelo's (☎ 22850 71486; d €45) Has reasonable rooms, but is open in high season only.

There are only a few tavernas in Agios Georgios. All serve fresh fish dishes and other Greek standards. **Maistrali** (☎ 22850 71807; dishes €3.80-7) has a pleasant terrace and also has rooms and fairly creaky internet access.

Perigiali (☎ 22850 71118; dishes €4-7), a popular place, has a large marble table encircling an old pine tree.

In Hora, **Taverna to Steki** (☎ 22850 71579; dishes €3.30-6.50) is a classic village eatery and is well known for its locally sourced ingredients and traditional food.

SCHINOUSA ΣΧΙΝΟΥΣΑ

pop 206

Schinoussa (skih-*noo*-sah) lies a mere 2km across the sea from Iraklia and is similar in nature – slow-paced, friendly and likeable. It has a number of beaches, although not all are attractive, and down-to-earth Hora (Panagia) on the breezy crest of the island has sweeping views of the sea.

Ferries dock at the fishing harbour of Mersini. Hora is a hot 1km uphill (domatia owners always meet ferries with transport).

There's a public telephone in the main square and a couple of general stores sell stamps. Tickets are sold at the port a few minutes before boats arrive. There is also a shop and tourist centre that sells ferry tickets at the entrance to Hora. In 2007 it was announced that Schinoussa was to have an ATM installed in the near future. A reasonably useful website is www.schinoussa.gr.

On the way down to Tsigouri beach is a little **folk museum** that features a reconstructed bread oven. Opening hours go with the flow of island life.

Dirt tracks lead from Hora to beaches around the coast. The nearest are **Tsigouri** and **Livadi**, both uncrowded outside August. Haul

a little further to decent beaches at **Almyros** and **Aligaria**. With the exception of Tsigouri, there are no shops or tavernas at the beaches, so take food and water.

Sleeping

There are a few rooms down at Mersini, but if you want to see the rest of the island you're much better off staying in Hora.

Anna Domatia (☎ 22850 71161; Hora; s/d €25/35) Just behind the main street on the west side of the village, these unfussy rooms are clean and comfortable and there's a friendly welcome.

Iliovasilima (☎ 22850 71948; iliovasilima@schinoussa.gr; Hora; s/d €40/55) Ideally located on the western outskirts of the village, looking south over the island, this bright, clean place has good-sized rooms and most of the balconies have fine views.

Grispos Tsigouri Beach Villas (☎ 22850 71930; fax 22850 71176; www.grisposvillas.com; Hora; s/d/tr incl buffet breakfast €65/80/95, apt €150; 🚰) About 250m down the dusty track from Hora and located right on the edge of Tsigouri beach, these rooms are a good size and have bright décor and surroundings. There are also apartments and other rooms nearby.

Eating

Grispos (dishes €3.50-7) This beachside restaurant at Tsigouri is part of the Grispos accommodation complex and offers decent island standards.

Loza (☎ 22850 71864; dishes €4.50-8) Right on the main street of Hora, and a local rendezvous point, Loza offers breakfasts for €7.50 as well as salads and pizzas. It's also a bakery and produces delicious pastries, including baklava and walnut pie.

Margarita (☎ 22850 74278; dishes €5-12) The terrace at this charming place has dreamy views of the sea to go with the modern Greek cuisine, which includes pricier seafood options. It's all creatively prepared and backed by a good wine list. A great choice is the mixed plate. Margarita's is midway along the village street, down an alleyway.

KOUFONISIA ΚΟΥΦΟΝΗΣΙΑ

pop 366

The islands of Ano Koufonisia and Kato Koufonisia face each other across blue waters. It's Ano Koufonisia that's populated. Its excellent beaches make it one of the most visited of the Little Cyclades islands, and

modernisation has taken hold. New hotels and studios are springing up, a marina with capacity for 50 yachts is due to be completed in 2008, and a new sewage treatment plant was under construction in 2007. Koufonisia's substantial fishing fleet still sustains a thriving local community outside the fleeting summer season.

A caïque ride away, **Kato Koufonisia** has some beautiful beaches and a lovely church. Archaeological digs on **Keros**, the rocky, bull-backed mountain of an island that looms over Koufonisia to the south, have uncovered over 100 Early Cycladic figurines, including the famous harpist and flautist now on display in Athens' National Archaeological Museum (p120).

Orientation & Information

Koufonisia's only settlement spreads out behind the ferry quay. On the west side of the quay is the planned yacht marina and on its east side is a wide harbour filled with moored fishing boats. A large town beach of flat, hard sand gives a great sense of space to the waterfront. Its inner edge is used as a road and everyone uses it as a football pitch. The older part of town, the *hora*, sprawls along a low hill above the harbour and is one long main street.

There are a couple of supermarkets along the road that leads inland from the beach to link with the main street, and there's a ticket agency halfway along the main street. The post office is along the first road leading sharply left as you reach the beach and the road leading inland. There is an ATM alongside.

Sights BEACHES

An easy walk along the sandy coast road to the east of the port leads in a couple of kilometres to **Finikas**, **Harakopou** and **Fano** beaches. All tend to become swamped with grilling bodies in July and August and nudity becomes more overt the further you go.

Beyond Fano a path leads to several rocky swimming places, then continues to the great bay at **Pori**, where a long crescent of sand slides effortlessly into the ultimate Greek-island dream sea. Pori can also be reached by an inland road from Hora.

Tours

Koufonisia Tours (☎ 22850 71671; www.koufonisiatours.gr), based at Villa Ostria hotel (see Sleeping,

below), organises caïque trips to Keros, Kato Koufonisi and to other islands of the Little Cyclades. Bike hire is also available.

Sleeping

Wild camping is not permitted on Koufonisia. There is a good selection of domatia and hotels, and **Koufonisia Tours** (☎ 22850 71671; www.koufonisiatours.gr) organises accommodation on the island.

Koufonisia Camping (☎ 22850 71683) This camping ground has been behind the tree-lined beach at Harakopou to the east of Hora for many years. At the time of writing it was reported that the ground would not be opening in 2007. We advise checking ahead for 2008 and 2009.

Lefteris Rooms (☎ 22850 71458; d/tr €40/45) Right behind the town beach and above Lefteris restaurant are these simple but colourful rooms, with the ones at the back being the most peaceful.

Anna's Rooms (☎ 22850 71061, 6974527838; s/d/tr/q €50/60/70/80; 🚰) In a quiet location at Louro on the west side of the port, these big, bright rooms are a great choice and the welcome is charming. They overlook the old harbour and are set amid colourful gardens. Each room has tea- and coffee-making facilities.

Ermis (☎ 22850 71693; fax 22850 74214; s/d €55/70) Behind the post office in a quiet location are these spacious rooms with attractive décor and big generous balconies at the front.

Villa Ostria (☎ 22850 71671; www.koufonisiatours.gr; s/d incl breakfast €60/70) A stylish, small hotel, Villa Ostria stands on the high ground above the beach and has a charming garden area. Rooms are smart and comfortable and have fridges.

Eating

Melissa (☎ 22850 71454; mains €3.50-6) Easily identified by the front half of a little sailing boat protruding from its wall, and by its multicoloured tables and chairs, Melissa prepares excellent fish dishes. Meat eaters are catered for also and vegetarians can combine tasty eggplant and onions with *briam* (mixed vegetables).

Lefteris (☎ 22850 71458; dishes €3.50-9) The long-established Lefteris dishes up reasonably priced Greek standards to huge numbers of visitors in high summer. Its vast terrace looks out over the town beach and it's open for breakfast and lunch also.

Capetan Nikolas (☎ 22850 71690; dishes €4.50-8.50) Deservedly famous, especially for its seafood, this cheerful, family-run restaurant overlooks the little harbour at Loutro. Locally caught fish, such as red mullet and sea bream, are a speciality and are priced by the kilo – for your selection, you browse in the kitchen.

Drinking

Koufonisia caters to a fairly sophisticated music bar set and has a number of venues.

Scholeio (☎ 22850 71837; ☎ 6pm-3.30am) A great little island bar and creperie that goes well with the island's laid-back ambience. Scholeio offers cocktails and plays jazz, blues and rock among other choice sounds. It's right at the western end of the village's main street above Loutro.

Sorokos (☎ 22850 71704; ☎ 4pm-3am) Drinks and snacks and hot sounds that range from early-hours lounge music to harder vibes at night make this a popular hang-out beyond the town beach.

DONOUSA ΔΟΝΟΥΣΑ

pop 110

Cancel plans: Donousa is where you stop bothering about which day it might be. In late July and August the island can be swamped by holidaymaking Greeks and sun-seeking visitors, but out of season be prepared to linger – and be rewarded for it.

Agios Stavros is Donousa's main settlement and port, a cluster of functional buildings round a handsome church, overlooking a small bay. Little has changed here over the years, but water shortage – on an island that was once always well supplied – has seen recent pipe-laying to houses from a new storage tank for imported water. The town also has a good beach, which also serves as a thoroughfare for infrequent vehicles and foot traffic to a clutch of homes, rental rooms and a taverna across the bay.

Roussos Travel (☎ 22850 51648) on the waterfront is the ticket agency for the local ferry *Express Skopelitis*.

Sigalis Travel (☎ 22850 51570, 6942269219) in the To Iliovasilima restaurant complex (see Sleeping & Eating, right) sells tickets for Blue Star ferries.

There is an ATM outside Roussos Travel (it's sometimes hidden behind a blue shutter for protection from blown sand, so don't miss it). But be sure to bring sufficient cash in high

season. There is a public telephone up a steep hill above the waterfront; it's hidden behind a tree. You can get telecards at the souvenir shop just up from the quay-end of the beach.

There is a **medical centre** (☎ 22850 51506) and postal agency just below the church.

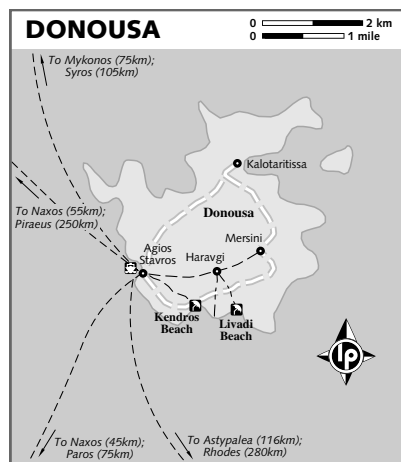
Kendros, situated 1.25km to the southeast of Agios Stavros, along a rather ugly bulldozed track, is a sandy and secluded beach with a seasonal taverna. **Livadi**, a dusty 1km hike further east, sees even fewer visitors. Both Kendros and Livadi are popular with naturalists and navel-/horizon-gazing dreamers. Bulldozed, unsurfaced roads have marred Donousa in places, but there are still delightful paths and tracks that lead into the hills to timeless little hamlets such as **Mersini**.

Sleeping & Eating

Most rooms on the island are fairly basic but are well kept, clean and in good locations. You should book ahead for stays in July and August, and even early September.

Prasinos Studios (☎ 22850 51579; d €35-50, apt €70) On the high ground on the far side of the beach is this pleasant complex with a mix of well-kept rooms.

To Iliovasilima (☎ 22850 51570; d/tr/studios €43/48/55; ☎) Just below Prasinos Studios and overlooking the beach, some of these reasonable rooms have kitchens. There's a popular restaurant with a fine terrace and a good selection of food (dishes €3.50 to €20). New studios and apartments are planned for 2008.



Capetan Giorgis (☎ 22850 51867; mains €3.50-7) Sturdy traditional food is on the menu at the Capetan's, where the terrace, just above the harbour, has good views across the bay.

There are a couple of food shops that have a reasonable selection of goods in July and August.

The hub of village life is Kafeneio To Kyma by the quay, where things liven up late into the night in summer.

AMORGOS ΑΜΟΡΓΟΣ

pop 1873

For many island lovers, Amorgos (ah-mor-gloss) is the jewel in the Cycladic crown. Lying well to the southeast of the main group, this exquisite island rises from the sea in a long dragon's back of craggy mountains that is 30km from tip to toe and 800m at its highest point. The island's southeast coast is unremittingly steep and boasts an extraordinary monastery embedded in a huge cliff. The northern half of the opposite coast is equally spectacular, but relents a little at the narrow inlet where the main port and town of Katapola lies.

Amorgos' other port town, Aegiali, lies at the island's northern end and is more appealing as a resort. It has a good beach and is encircled by rugged mountains. The enchanting Hora (also known as Amorgos) nestles high in the mountains above Katapola.

You need to work quite hard to get to Amorgos, although ferry connections in summer are good and at the time of writing there was talk of a seaplane service starting from the mainland in 2008. However, locals are determined to focus on sustainable tourism.

There's plenty of scope for beaching, but Amorgos is much more about compelling archaeology, Cycladic life and the outdoor world – there's great walking, scuba diving, and a burgeoning rock climbing scene, although currently the latter is for the very experienced rather than for the passing thrillseeker.

Getting There & Away

Until about mid-2009, four times a week in summer, twice a week in winter, Blue Star car ferries run a service from Piraeus via Naxos and the Little Cyclades to Amorgos

(€27.50, 9¼ hours). Arrival is in the early hours. Blue Star continues from Amorgos to Astypalea (€15.50, 1½ hours) and Kos (€22.50, 3¼ hours). One Blue Star ferry runs on Sunday from Amorgos to Rhodes (€25.50, 6½ hours).

There are several boats offering weekly services to Paros (€15, three hours) and Syros (€19, 4½ hours).

The small ferry *Express Skopelitis* runs a circular route between Naxos and Amorgos and to the other islands in the Little Cyclades (see p410).

Most ferries stop at both Katapola and Aegiali, but well before your date of leaving be sure to check which town is the departure port for that day.

FAST BOAT & CATAMARAN

In July and August Hellenic Seaways runs a fast catamaran six days a week, except Wednesday, from Piraeus to Amorgos (€53, five hours) and from Amorgos to Santorini (€18.50, 1¼ hours), Folegandros (€25, 2¼ hours), Sifnos (€32, three hours) and Syros (€28.50, 2½ hours).

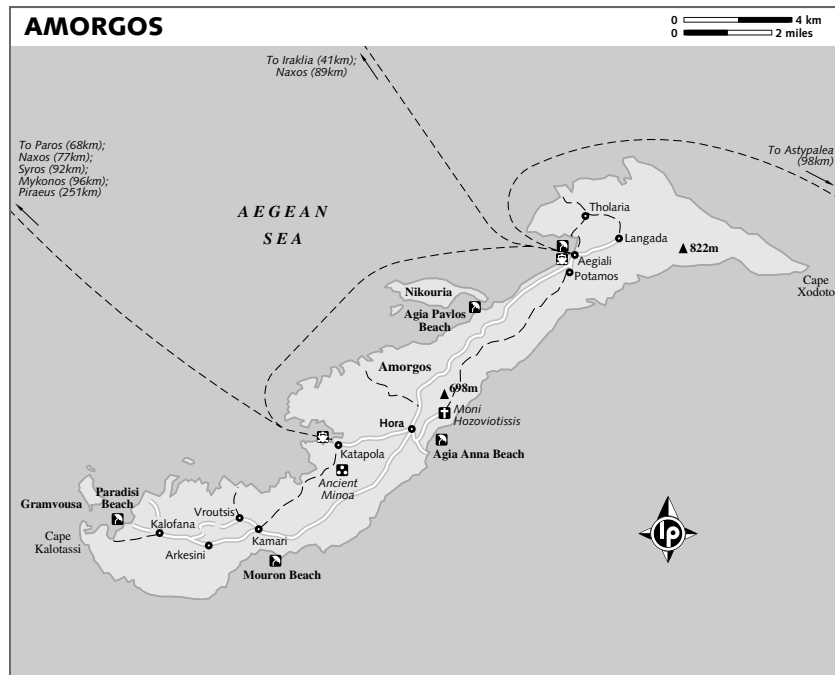
Getting Around

Regular buses go from Katapola to Hora (€1.20, 15 minutes), Moni Hozoviotissis (€1.40, 15 minutes) and Agia Anna Beach (€1.30, 20 minutes), and less-frequent services go to Aegiali (€2.10, 30 minutes). However, there are fewer services on weekends. There are also buses from Aegiali to the picturesque village of Langada. Schedules are posted on bus windscreens.

Cars and motorcycles are available for rent from the travel agencies **N Synodinos** (☎ 22850 71201; synodinos@nax.forthnet.gr; Katapola; ☎ year-round) and **Aegialis Tours** (☎ 22850 73107; fax 22850 73394; www.amorgos-aegialis.com; Aegiali).

KATAPOLA ΚΑΤΑΠΟΛΑ

The island's principal port, Katapola, straggles round the curving shoreline of a dramatic bay in the most verdant part of the island. The fascinating and extensive remains of the ancient city of **Minoa**, as well as a **Mycenaean cemetery**, lie above the port and can be reached by a steep, surfaced road. Amorgos has also yielded many Cycladic finds; the largest figurine in the National Archaeological Museum (p120) in Athens was found in the vicinity of Katapola.



Orientation & Information

Boats dock right on the waterfront. The bus station is to the left along the main waterfront, on the eastern shore of the bay.

A bank (with ATM) is midwaterfront and there's an ATM next to N Synodinos. There is a postal agency next to the Hotel Minoa on the central square. The island's police station (☎ 22850 71210) is located in Hora.

Hotel Minoa (☎ 22850 71480; internet access per hr €2.50)

N Synodinos (☎ 22850 71201; synodinos@nax.forth-net.gr; 🗓 year-round) Sells ferry tickets and offers money exchange and car rental (per day in high season €50).

Port police (☎ 22850 71259) On the central square.

Sleeping & Eating

Domatia owners usually meet ferries and are among the most restrained and polite in the Cyclades.

Katapola Community Camping (☎ 22850 71802; camp sites per adult/child/tent €6/4/6) Set back from the eastern end of the bay, this shaded camping ground is a reasonable option.

our pick Eleni's Rooms (☎ 22850 71628; rooms eleni@hack-box.net; s/d/tr/apt €50/60/70/100) An un-

beatable position to the west of the ferry quay makes these unfussy but bright and airy rooms an excellent choice, and the owner is friendly and kind. The rooms rise through several levels and offer unbeatable views. You can even hop down in seconds for a morning swim at an adjoining beach.

Diosmarini (☎ 22850 71636; diosmarini@yahoo.com; d/tr/apt €50/65/100) On the northern shores of the bay and about 1km from the ferry quay, Diosmarini is a delightful option with lovely big rooms in a handsome and modern Cycladic-style building. There are airy views from most balconies.

Pension Sofia (☎ 22850 71494; www.pension-sofia.com; d/apt €55/65; 🍷) The charming, family-run Sofia stands amid gardens and little meadows in a quiet area of town. Rooms are fresh and colourful.

Elichryson (☎ 22850 71517; €3-7; 🗓 8am-10pm) Ideal for breakfast (€3 to €6), this pleasant café is just back from the main waterfront.

Mouragio (☎ 22850 71011; dishes €4-7.50) A local favourite, not least for its expertise with fish dishes and seafood. This traditional taverna is on the main waterfront near the ferry quay.

Shellfish are by the kilo but reasonable dishes include delicious fish soup.

our pick Vitsentzos (☎ 22850 71518; dishes €5.50-9)

Exposed stonework and a varnished wooden floor lend Vitsentzos an authentic old-world atmosphere. The waterfront terrace is also a delight and the food is satisfyingly traditional with an infusion of modern influences. Seafood is by the kilogram.

Kasbah (☎ 22850 71592) is a cheerful café next door to Vitsentzos and is run by the same family. Lip-smacking ice cream and delicious homemade cakes are the rule.

Drinking

Moon Bar (☎ 22850 71598) Set the world to rights in great company at this relaxing place on the northern waterfront, where the music ranges from classical through blues, rock and funk into the early hours. Breakfasts are €5.

Le Grand Bleu (☎ 22850 71633) Still flying on the name of the iconic film *The Big Blue*, this popular bar plays rock, reggae and modern Greek music on the northern waterfront.

HORA ΧΩΠΑ

The old capital of Hora sparkles like a snow-drift across its rocky ridge. It stands 400m above sea level and is capped by a 13th-century *kastro* atop a prominent rock pinnacle. Old windmills stand like sentinels on surrounding cliffs. However, there's a distinct veneer of sophistication, not least in the handful of trendy bars and shops that enhance Hora's appeal without eroding its timelessness.

The bus stop is on a small square at the edge of town. The post office is on the main square, reached by a pedestrian lane from the bus stop. The police station (☎ 22850 71210) is halfway along the main street.

Hora's **archaeology museum** (🗓 9am-1pm & 6-8.30pm Tue-Sun) is on the main pedestrian thoroughfare, near Café Bar Zygós.

Sleeping & Eating

Hora has a handful of pleasant pensions.

Pension Ilias (☎ 22850 71277; s/d/tr/apt €40/50/60/75) Tucked away amid a jumble of traditional houses just down from the bus stop is this unpretentious family-run place with decent rooms.

View To Big Blue (☎ 22850 71814/6932248867; s/d €45/60) At the top end of the village is this attractive place in its own little garden. Rooms are very bright and comfy.

Café Bar Zygós (☎ 22850 71350; snacks €3-10; 🗓 8am-3am) This café lies at the heart of Hora's main street. It's a charming place inside and out, and has a rooftop terrace. It offers breakfast, sandwiches, baguettes, salads and cold plates as well as coffee, delicious cakes, candied fruit and ice cream – all to Greek music by day, and '80s and '90s rock at night.

Keep heading up the winding main street to reach **Tsagaradiko** (☎ 6944872275; dishes €3-8), a great little mezedhes place with tables on a lovely small square.

MONI HOZOVIOTISSIS ΜΟΝΗ ΧΟΖΟΒΙΩΤΙΣΣΗΣ

Amorgos is defined by the iconic **Moni Hozoviotissis** (🗓 8am-1pm & 5-7pm), a dazzling white building embedded in an awesome cliff face high above the sea. It lies on the precipitous east coast below Hora. A few monks still live here and short tours, which usually end with a pleasant chat with one of the monks, take place sporadically, usually when a reasonable number of visitors have gathered at the door of the monastery. The tour is free but donations are appreciated.

The monastery contains a miraculous icon that was found in the sea below the cliff. It got there (allegedly unaided) from Asia Minor, Cyprus or Jerusalem – depending on which legend you're told. Out of respect, modest dress is essential (long trousers for men, a long skirt or dress and covered shoulders for women).

A great round-trip is to catch the bus from Katapola to Hora, stroll the length of Hora's main street and on to an upper car park below a radio tower. Go down to the right of the car park viewpoint, through a gate and then follow a zigzag track with exhilarating views to reach the road. Turn left here to reach a junction, the left branch of which leads in 500m to the monastery. You can then catch the bus back to Katapola from the junction, or walk down to Agia Anna beach, which is 1.5km downhill, and catch the bus from the car park there after a dip.

AEGIALI ΑΓΓΙΑΛΗ

Aegiali is Amorgos' second port and has more of a resort style, not least because of the fine sweep of sand that lines the inner edge of the bay on which the village stands. Steep slopes and impressive crags lie above the main village.

Efficient **Amorgos Travel** (☎ 22850 73401; www.amorgostravel.gr), above the central supermarket on the waterfront, can help with a host of travel needs including ferry tickets, accommodation and island tours. Check it out for diving and walking possibilities also. Long-established **Aegialis Tours** (☎ 22850 73107; fax 22850 73394; www.aegialistours.com) sells ferry tickets, and can organise accommodation, tours and vehicle hire.

There's a postal agency about 100m uphill from Aegialis Tours.

Tours

Ask at travel agencies about a daily bus outing (€25) around the island that leaves at 9.30am and returns at 4.30pm, with stops at Agia Pavlos, Moni Hozoviotissis and Hora. Boat trips around the island (€30) and to the little Cyclades (€40) can also be arranged.

Sleeping

As is the case in Katapola, domatia owners meet the ferries.

Aegiali Camping (☎ 22850 73333; camp sites per adult/child/tent €5.50/2.60/3.50) Good facilities and a pleasantly shaded location on the road behind the beach makes this camping ground an attractive proposition.

Pension Askas (☎ 22850 73333; www.askaspension.gr; d/tr €60/70; ♿) Next to Aegiali Camping is this decent pension in a garden setting, with clean, attractive rooms.

Lakki Village (☎ 22850 73505; www.lakkivillage.gr; s/d/tr incl breakfast €65/75/80, 2-/3-/4-person studios/apt incl breakfast €85/100/115; ♿) This attractive, well-kept complex ambles inland from the beachfront through lovely gardens and water features. Rooms are in Cycladic-style buildings and have colourful traditional furnishings.

Eating

Restaurant Lakki (☎ 22850 73253; dishes €3.50-8) A beach and garden setting makes the restaurant of Lakki Village a relaxing place to enjoy well-prepared Greek dishes.

To Koralli (☎ 22850 73217; dishes €4-7) Envious views enhance the good cuisine at this cheerful restaurant, which offers delicious fish and mezes platters. It's reached by a flight of steps at the eastern end of the waterfront.

our pick To Limani (☎ 22850 73269; dishes €4-9) Delicious traditional fare prepared with home-grown produce makes Limani a

popular place. Local dishes include baked goat and, for fish lovers, delicious fish soup, while vegetarians can enjoy treats such as black-eye beans with spinach. The downstairs walls exhibit works by local artists, the big canvases by Wolfgang Mann being particularly good. There's a hugely popular Thai food night every Friday except during August. The owners also have beautiful rooms, studios and apartments high above the bay in the village of Potamos, starting at €55 for a double.

AROUND AMORGOS

On the east coast, south of Moni Hozoviotissis, is **Agia Anna Beach**, the nearest beach to both Katapola and Hora. Don't get excited; the car park is bigger than any of the little pebbly beaches strung out along the rocky shoreline, and all the beaches fill up quickly. Next to the car park on the cliff-top there's a small cantina selling food and drinks.

The lovely villages of **Langada** and **Tholaria** nestle amid the craggy slopes above Aegiali. Their locations are magnificent and views from both are worth the trip alone. The two are linked to each other, and to Aegiali, by a signposted circular path that takes about four hours (Greek time). Regular buses run between the villages and Aegiali.

IOS ΙΟΣ

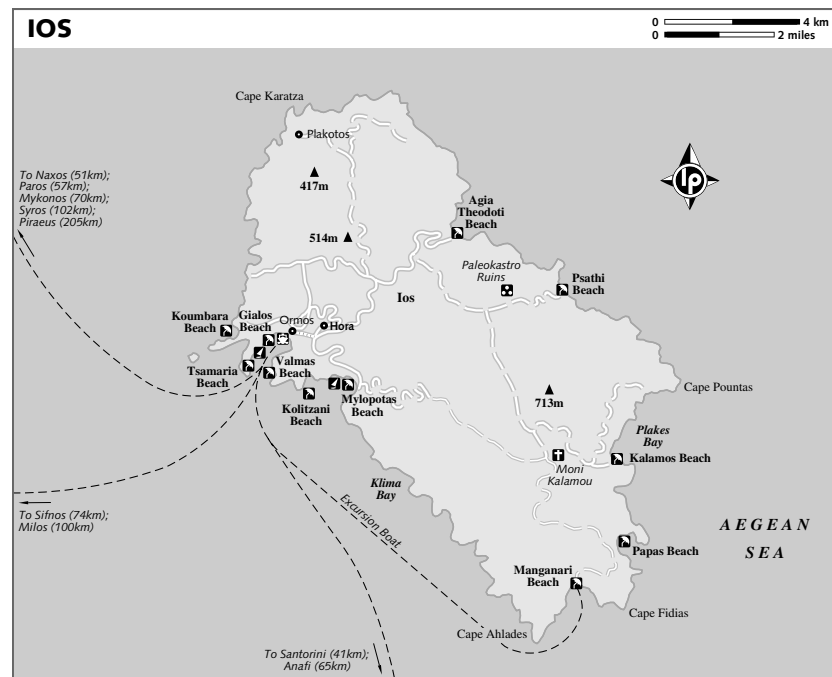
pop 1838

Ios is slowly shedding its image as the party capital of the Cyclades. It has always been as traditional in landscape and cultural terms as any other island in the group, and Greek life goes on sturdily beyond the wall-to-wall bars and nightclubs of Hora and the beach scene. Families and older holidaymakers are heading for Ios in increasing numbers. There's still hard partying, however, and you need some stamina to survive the late night action in the centre of Hora.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Until suspension of operations in July of 2007, **AirSea Lines** (☎ 21094 02012; www.airsealines.com) ran one seaplane flight a day from Thursday to Monday between Lavrio and Ios. Due to upgrading requirements the company suspended its Aegean schedule in



July 2007. The schedule was still suspended at the time of writing (September 2007). The company states, however, that it will resume its Aegean service as soon as possible and readers are advised to check the company website.

FAST BOAT & CATAMARAN

There are daily catamarans to Piraeus (€49.50, 5½ hours), Santorini (€15.50, 40 minutes), Naxos (€20.20, one hour), Paros (€18.90, 1½ hours), Mykonos (€26.10, two hours) and Iraklio and Rethymno on Crete (€35.80, 2½ hours).

FERRY

There are at least four daily connections with Piraeus (€30.50, seven hours), Paros (€12.50, 2½ hours) and Naxos (€11.50, 1¼ hours). There are daily boats to Santorini (€8.50, 1¼ hours), five-weekly boats to Sikinos (€3.80, 30 minutes), Folegandros (€5.60, 1½ hours) and Anafi (€8.20, three hours) and four-weekly boats to Syros (€19.50, 2¾ hours).

There are three boats weekly to Milos (€14.10, 3½ hours) and Mykonos (€12.70,

seven hours), two boats weekly to Kimolos (€9.40, 2½ hours), Sifnos (€11.10, five hours), Serifos (€12.20, six hours) and Kythnos (€16.20, 8½ hours).

One boat goes to Amorgos on Saturday (€9.70, 2½ hours).

Getting Around

In summer crowded buses run between Ormos, Hora (€1.20) and Mylopotas Beach (€1.20) about every 15 minutes. Private excursion buses go to Manganari Beach (€8, 10.30am and 12.30am) and Agia Theodoti Beach (€1.50, in July and August).

Caïques travelling from Ormos to Manganari cost €10 per person for a return trip (departing 11am daily). Ormos and Hora both have car and motorcycle rental that can be booked through the Plakiotis Travel Agency (p420) and Acteon Travel (p420).

HORA, ORMOS & MYLOPOTAS ΧΩΡΑ, ΟΡΜΟΣ & ΜΥΛΟΠΟΤΑΣ

Ios has three population centres, all very close together on the west coast: the port, Ormos; the capital, Hora (also known as

the 'village'), 2km inland, by road, from the port; and Mylopotas, the beach 2km downhill from Hora. Gialos Beach stretches west of the port.

Orientation

The bus terminal in Ormos is straight ahead from the ferry quay on Plateia Emirou. If you don't mind the heat, it's possible to walk from the port to Hora by heading up left from Plateia Emirou, then right up a stepped path after about 100m. It's about 1.2km.

In Hora the main landmark is the big cathedral opposite the bus stop, on the other side of the dusty car park and play area. Plateia Valeta is the central square. There are public toilets uphill behind the main square.

The road straight ahead from the bus stop leads to Mylopotas Beach.

Information

There's an ATM right by the information kiosks at the ferry quay. In Hora, the National Bank of Greece, behind the church, and the Commercial Bank, nearby, both have ATMs.

The post office in Hora is a block behind the town hall side of the main road.

Acteon Travel (☎ 22860 91343; acteon@otenet.gr) On the square near the quay, and in Hora and Mylopotas.

Doubleclick Internet (☎ 22860 92155; Hora; per hr €4) A well-equipped place with good connection.

Hospital (☎ 22860 91227) On the way to Gialos, 250m northwest of the quay; there are several doctors in Hora.

Plakiotis Travel Agency (☎ 22860 91221; plaktr2@otenet.gr) On the Ormos waterfront.

Port police (☎ 22860 91264) At the southern end of the Ormos waterfront, just before los Camping.

Sights

Hora is a lovely Cycladic village with a labyrinth of narrow lanes and cubist houses. It's at its most charming during daylight hours when the bars are shut and it recaptures the atmosphere of other island towns.

The **archaeological museum** (admission free; ☎ 8.30am-3pm Tue-Sun) is in the town hall by the bus stop.

Activities

Banana rides (€10), canoe rental (per hour €8) and mountain-bike rental (per day €10) are all available at **Vialos Watersports** (☎ 22860 92463, 6944926625; ralfburgstahler@hotmail.com; Gialos Beach). Hire windsurfing equipment (per hour

€15, per half-day €30, lessons free), or take a tube ride (€14 to €17).

Mylopotas Water Sports Center (☎ 22860 91622; www.ios-sports.gr; Mylopotas Beach) has snorkelling and windsurfing gear, pedal boats (per hour €15) and canoes (per hour/day €8/24) for hire. Windsurfing rental (per hour/day €15/40), waterskiing (per 10/15 minutes €27/30) and banana rides (€10 to €15) are available. There's also a speedboat taxi.

Windsurfing (per hour €15, per day €40) is on offer at **Meltemi Water Sports** (☎ 22860 91680, 69321153912; www.meltemiwatersports.com; Mylopotas) at the beach opposite Far Out Camping. Laser sailboats (per hour/day €30/65) are also available for hire, as are canoes and pedalos. Tube rides cost from €15 to €30. Meltemi runs a similar scene at Manganari Beach and has a water taxi from Mylopotas to other beaches.

Sleeping ORMOs

The port has several good sleeping options, reasonable eating places, a couple of handy beaches and regular bus connections to Hora and on to other beaches.

los Camping (☎ 22860 92035; fax 22860 92101; camp sites per person €8; 🚻) Tucked away on the west side of Ormos, this site has good facilities, including a restaurant in high season. Head all the way round the waterfront.

Hotel Poseidon (☎ 22860 91091; www.poseidonhotel.ios.gr; s/d/tr €71/85/102; 🚻 🚰) A great choice: this family-run hotel stands high above the port and has terrific views from its front balconies. Rooms are immaculate and well equipped and there's a pleasant swimming pool.

GIALOS BEACH

Hotel Helena (☎ 22860 91276; www.hotelhelena.gr; s/d/tr €50/70/90, apt €120; 🚻 🚰) Set a short way back from the midpoint of the beach is this quiet and well-run place. It has a cool patio, bright, clean rooms and a friendly welcome.

To Corali (☎ 22860 91272; www.coralihotel.com; s/d incl breakfast €55/80; 🚻 🚰 🚰) These sparkling rooms are in a good position right opposite the beach and are attached to the restaurant of the same name. There's a colourful garden at the rear and the owners create a happy atmosphere.

HORA

Francesco's (☎ 22860 91223; www.francescos.net; dm €15, s €35-40, d €45-50; 🚻) Long established and very

well run, the famous Francesco's has clean dormitories and rooms and is in an enviable position with great views of the bay. It's away from the centre but is a lively meeting place for the younger international set. The party spirit rules supreme and there's a busy bar and terrace.

Skala Hotel (☎ 22860 92027; skalahtl@otenet.gr; d/tr €85/100, apt €90-160; 🚻 🚰 🚰) If you want to rise above the central hubbub, a short hike uphill from the centre takes you to this well-sited hotel with great views over Hora. Rooms are bright and a good size and have kitchenettes. There's a pool and a Jacuzzi.

MYLOPOTAS

Purple Pig Stars Camping & Bungalows (☎ 22860 91302; www.purplepigstars.com; Mylopotas Beach; camp sites per person €9, dm €20, d €44; 🚻) This pleasant camping ground is right at the entrance to the beach and has a relaxing tempo while being close to the action. It's shaded by trees.

Far Out Camping And Beach Club (☎ 22860 91468; www.faroutclub.com; Mylopotas Beach; camp sites per adult/child €12/6, no charge for own tent, small/large bungalows €12/20, studio €90; 🚻 🚰) There's plenty of action here, backed by wall-to-wall facilities. Meltemi Water Sports (see opposite) is just across the road, and a diving centre has been established in recent years. There's a bar, restaurant and four swimming pools. The 'bungalows' range from small tent-sized affairs to neat little 'roundhouses' with double and single beds.

our pick Hotel Nissos los (☎ 22860 91610; www.nissosioshotel.com; Mylopotas Beach; s/d/tr €50/70/85; 🚻 🚰) This excellent place has bright and fresh rooms, and colourful wall murals add a cheerful touch. Each room has tea- and coffee-making facilities. The welcome is friendly and good-natured, and the beach is just across the road. There's an outdoor Jacuzzi. In front of the hotel is the Bamboo Restaurant & Pizzeria (p422).

Paradise Rooms (☎ 22860 91621; parios11@otenet.gr; Mylopotas Beach; s/d €55/65; 🚻) The family-run rooms here are about half way along the beachfront, and the beautiful garden is looked after with love and skill. Breakfast costs from €3 to €4.

Paradise Apartments (☎ 22860 91621; Mylopotas Beach; apt €90-140; 🚻 🚰) These apartments are located a short distance away from Paradise Rooms, and are run by a member of the same family. They're in a secluded setting and have a lovely pool and big patio. At both Paradise

accommodations, guests can get a 50% reduction at Mylopotas Water Sports Center (opposite).

Eating ORMOs

Susannah (☎ 22860 51108; dishes €6.50-12) No-nonsense food, from Greek salads to pasta and pizza, keeps this harbour taverna popular with locals. It's set back from the street in a wide square, by Acteon Travel.

GIALOS BEACH

To Corali (☎ 22860 91272; dishes €5-9) Mouthwatering wood-fired pizzas are list-toppers at this friendly, well-run eatery that's right by the beach and in front of the hotel of the same name. You can sit out at tables on the beach. It does pastas and salads as well, and it's a great spot for coffee, drinks and ice cream.

HORA

Porky's (☎ 22860 91143; snacks €2-4.50) Fuel up with toasties, salads, crepes and hamburgers at this relentless Ios survivor just off the main square.

Old Byron (☎ 22860 92125; dishes €3.50-15; 🍷 7pm-late) A little way up the main street from the cathedral is this wine bar and eatery (the previous location of Lord Byron – see below), offering an eclectic menu that includes pasta, mezzedhes and even bangers and mash. There's background Greek and contemporary music.

our pick Pomodoro (☎ 22860 91387; dishes €5.50-12) Opened in recent years, this new Ios favourite spreads over two floors. There's a fabulous roof garden with panoramic views. It's just off the main square above Disco 69, and offers authentic wood-fired pizzas as just part of its excellent Italian and Mediterranean menu.

Ali Baba's (☎ 22860 91558; dishes €6-10) In the same venue as the restaurant of that name there's another great Ios favourite. This is the place for tasty Thai dishes, including *pad thai* (thin rice noodles stir-fried with dried shrimp, bean sprouts, tofu and egg) cooked by authentic Thai chefs. The service is very upbeat and there's entertainment. It's on the same street as the Emporiki bank.

Lord Byron (☎ 22860 92125; dishes €7-14) Near the main square, this long-standing favourite is relaxing and intimate, and the food is a great fusion of Greek and Italian. Dishes range from shrimp cooked in a tomato sauce with

feta and ouzo to penne with a wild mushroom and cream sauce – and it all comes in generous helpings.

There are several *gyros* stands where you can get a cheap bite.

MYLOPOTAS

Drakos Taverna (☎ 22860 91281; dishes €3.50-9) Enjoy reasonably priced fish dishes (although some species are by the kilogram) at this popular taverna that overlooks the sea at the southern end of the beach. Whatever's on the dish, you get the feeling that it may well have hopped straight from the water into the kitchen and then onto your plate.

Harmony (☎ 22860 91613; dishes €3.50-12) Few places take chill-out to the honed level of this great bar. Hammocks, deckchairs and discerning sounds set the pace and kids are well looked after here. It's just along the northern arm of Mylopotas beach. There's live music too, and Tex-Mex food is the main attraction.

Bamboo Restaurant & Pizzeria (☎ 22860 91648; dishes €5-8.50) Run by a member of the same family that operates Hotel Nissos Ios (p421), this pleasant place offers traditional *mousakas* and tasty pizzas, plus a range of other Greek dishes.

Entertainment

Nightlife on Ios is a blitz. No-one signs up for an early night in Hora's tiny main square, where it gets so crowded by midnight that you won't be able to fall down, even if you want to. Be young and carefree – but (women especially) also be careful. For a marginally quieter life there are some less full-on venues around, including Ios Club, Ali Baba's and Orange Bar.

Slammer Bar (☎ 22860 92119; Main Sq, Hora) Hammers out house, rock and Latin. Multiple tequila shots, and head-banging in every sense.

Superfly (☎ 22860 92259; Main Sq, Hora) Plays funky house tunes.

Disco 69 (☎ 22860 91064; Main Sq, Hora) Offers hard-core drinking – and hard-core T-shirts – to a background of disco and current hits.

Sweet Irish Dream (☎ 22860 91141) It's Guinness on tap at this IOS (Ireland Over Seas) hang-out on the right-hand side of the road as you enter Hora.

Ios Club (☎ 22860 91410) Head here for a cocktail and watch the sun set to classical,

Latin and jazz music from a great terrace with sweeping views. It's along the pathway by Sweet Irish Dream.

Ali Baba's (☎ 22860 91558) Offers a mix of entertainment that includes the latest Hollywood films, mainstream music, and bands playing originals and covers.

Orange Bar (☎ 22860 91814) A more easy-paced music bar playing rock, indie and Brit-pop just outside the war zone.

Other popular late-night bars and clubs on the square:

Blue Note (☎ 22860 92271)

Flames Bar (☎ 22860 92448)

Red Bull (☎ 22860 91019)

Scorpion's is a late-night dance-to-trance and progressive venue with laser shows. After-shock goes for sensation with raunchy dancers and house, trance and Greek hits as well as guest DJs.

AROUND IOS

Travellers are lured to Ios by its nightlife, but also by its beaches. Vying with Mylopotas as one of the best is **Manganari**, a long swath of fine white sand on the south coast, reached by bus or by caique in summer (see Getting Around, p419).

From Ormos, it's a 10-minute walk past the little church of Agia Irini for **Valmas Beach**. A 1.3km walk northwest of Ormos, **Koumbara** is the official clothes-optional beach. **Tsamaria**, nearby, is nice and sheltered when it's windy elsewhere.

Agia Theodoti, Psathi and Kalamos Beaches, all on the northeast coast, are more remote. Psathi is a good windsurfing venue.

Moni Kalamou, on the way to Manganari and Kalamos Beaches, stages a huge **religious festival** in late August and a **festival of music and dance** in September.

SANTORINI (THIRA) ΣΑΝΤΟΠΙΝΗ (ΘΗΡΑ)

pop 13,402

Fantastic, fabulous Santorini deserves all the superlatives. Even the most jaded traveller succumbs to the awesome drama of this surreal landscape, relic of what was probably the biggest eruption in recorded history. That you share the experience with hordes of other visitors is inevitable. Embrace it all.

The caldera and its vast curtain wall of multicoloured cliffs is truly awesome. If you want to experience the full dramatic impact it's worth arriving by a slower ferry with open decks, rather than by enclosed catamaran or hydrofoil.

Santorini is famous for its spectacular sunsets. The village of Oia on the northern tip of the island is a hugely popular sunset viewing site because there is an uninterrupted view of the sun as it finally sinks below the horizon. From farther south down the caldera edge, the last of the setting sun can be obscured by the islands of Nea Kameni and Thirasia. Take your pick, however. You can enjoy most of the sunset from almost anywhere along the rim of the caldera, especially if you want to avoid the sometimes feverish crush at Oia.

The main port, Athinios, stands on a cramped shelf of land at the base of Sphinx-like cliffs and is a scene of marvellous chaos that always seems to work itself out when ferries arrive. Buses (and taxis) meet all ferries and then cart passengers through an ever-rising series of S-bends to the capital,

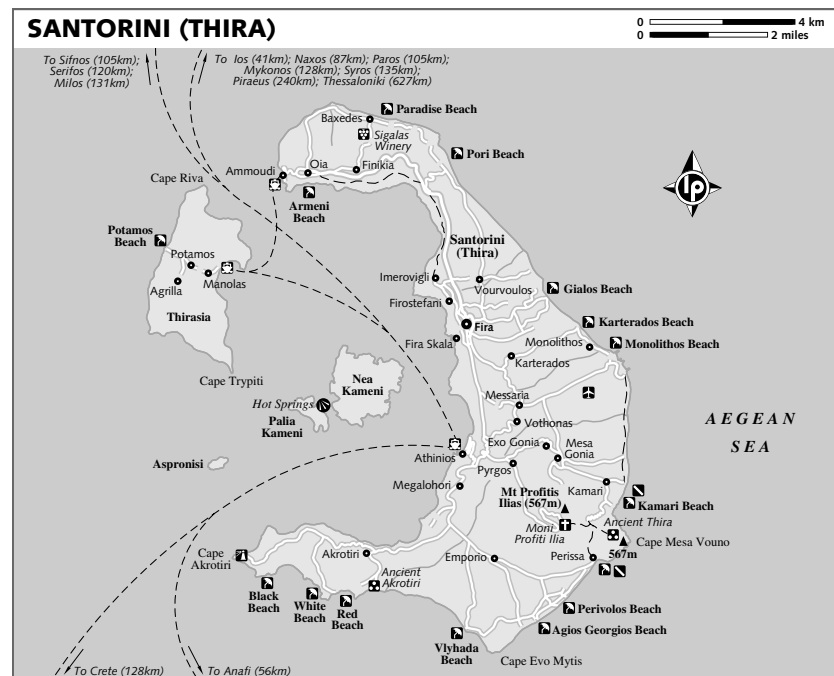
Fira, which fringes the edge of the cliffs like a snowy cornice.

History

Minor eruptions have been the norm in Greece's earthquake record, but Santorini has bucked the trend – and with attitude – throughout history. Eruptions here were genuinely earth-shattering, and so wrenching that they changed the shape of the island several times.

Dorians, Venetians and Turks occupied Santorini, as they did all other Cycladic islands, but its most influential early inhabitants were Minoans. They came from Crete some time between 2000 and 1600 BC, and the settlement at Akrotiri (p431) dates from the peak years of their great civilisation.

The island was circular then and was called Strongili (Round One). In about 1650 BC a colossal volcanic eruption caused the centre of Strongili to sink, leaving a caldera with high cliffs – now one of the world's most dramatic sights. Some archaeologists have speculated that this catastrophe destroyed not only



SANTORINI'S UNSETTLING PAST

Always unstable, Santorini was part of a series of volcanoes over a million years ago. The volcanoes became dormant, and around 3000 BC the first human settlers arrived to take advantage of the fertile soil. From evidence found at Akrotiri, it appears that they led civilised lives and fashioned a highly sophisticated culture.

But the peace and harmony didn't last, and around 1650 BC a chain of earthquakes and eruptions culminated in one of the largest explosions in the history of the planet. Thirty cubic kilometres of magma spewed forth and a column of ash 36km high jetted into the atmosphere. The centre of the island collapsed, producing a caldera that the sea quickly filled. The eruption also generated huge tsunamis that travelled with dangerous force all the way to Crete and Israel; nearby Anafi was engulfed by one such gigantic wave. It's widely held that the catastrophe was responsible for the demise of Crete's Minoan culture, one of the most powerful civilisations in the Aegean at that time.

After the Big One, Santorini settled down for a time and was even recolonised. In 236 BC volcanic activity separated Thirasia from the main island. Further changes continued intermittently. In 197 BC the islet now known as Palia Kameni appeared in the caldera, and in AD 726 there was a major eruption that catapulted pumice all the way to Asia Minor. The south coast of Santorini collapsed in 1570, taking the ancient port of Eleusis with it. An eruption in 1707 created Nea Kameni Islet next to Palia Kameni.

A major earthquake measuring 7.8 on the Richter scale savaged the island in 1956, killing scores of people and destroying most of the houses in Fira and Oia. The renaissance is remarkable; the resilience and insouciance of locals even more so. For lovers of impermanence, precariousness and drama, Santorini is beyond compare.

Akrotiri but the structure, and eventually the essence, of Minoan civilisation.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Olympic Airlines (☎ 22860 22493; www.olympicairlines.com), at the airport, operates five flights daily in high season between Athens and Santorini (€79, 45 minutes).

Aegean Airlines (☎ airport 22860 28500; www.aegeanair.com) has five flights daily between Athens and Santorini (€56 to €75, 45 minutes), four flights daily to and from Mykonos (€99, 45 minutes) and two flights daily to and from Thessaloniki (€118, 45 minutes), via Athens.

From Easter to September, **Sky Express** (☎ 28102 23500; www.skyexpress.gr) has at least four flights a week to Iraklio, Crete (€74, 30 minutes), four flights a week to Mykonos (€74, 35 minutes) and daily flights to Rhodes (€84, 40 minutes). Book online or enquire at travel agencies.

From June to September, **AirSea Lines** (☎ 21094 02012; www.airsealines.com) runs one seaplane every day, except Tuesday and Wednesday, between Lavrio and Santorini (€112, 1½ hours) via Ios.

Until suspension of operations in July of 2007, **AirSea Lines** (☎ 21094 02012; www.airsea

lines.com) ran one seaplane flight a day from Thursday to Monday between Lavrio and Santorini via Ios. Due to upgrading requirements the company suspended its Aegean schedule in July 2007. The schedule was still suspended at the time of writing (September 2007). The company states, however, that it will resume its Aegean service as soon as possible and readers are advised to check the company website.

FAST BOAT & CATAMARAN

Daily services run to and from Ios (€16, 30 minutes), Naxos (€29, 1½ hours), Paros (€25.30, 2¼ hours), Mykonos (€28, three to four hours), Folegandros (€14, 45 minutes), Sifnos (€31, 1¼ hours), Iraklio (€30.90 1¼ hours) and Piraeus (€55.50, 5¼ hours).

FERRY

There are at least four boats daily to Naxos (€15.50, three hours), Paros (€16.50, three to four hours), Ios (€8.50, 1¼ hours) and Piraeus (€32.50, nine hours) and two boats a week to Tinos (€14, five hours), Kythnos (€19.70, eight hours) and Folegandros (€6.70, 1½ to 2½ hours). Change at Naxos for Amorgos.

Seven boats weekly go to Anafi (€6.90, one hour), Sifnos (€12.50, 7¼ hours), Sikinos

(€9.80, 2½ hours), Iraklio (€15.10, 4½ hours) and Skiathos (€33.50, 18½ hours).

There are two weekly ferries running to Mykonos (€14, six hours), Milos (€15.50, four hours), Kimolos (€16.20, 3¼ hours), Syros (€23, 5¼ hours), Serifos (€16.20, nine hours) and Thessaloniki (€41.10, 25 hours).

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

There are frequent bus connections in summer between Fira's bus station and the airport, located southwest of Monolithos Beach. Enthusiastic hotel and domatia staff meet flights, and some also return guests to the airport. A taxi to the airport costs €12.

BUS

In summer buses leave Fira every half-hour for Oia (€1.20), Monolithos (€1.20), Kamari (€1.20) and Perissa (€1.90). There are less-frequent buses to Exo Gonia (€1.20), Perivolos (€1.90) and Vlyhada (€2). In summer the last regular bus to Fira from Oia leaves at 11.20pm.

Buses leave Fira, Kamari and Perissa for the port of Athinios (€1.60, 30 minutes) 1½ hours before most ferry departures. Buses for Fira meet all ferries, even late at night. It is wise to check port departures well in advance.

CABLE CAR & DONKEY

A **cable car** (☎ 22860 22977; M Nomikou; ☎ every 20min 7am-10pm, to 9pm winter) hums smoothly between Fira and the small port below, known as Fira Skala. One-way tickets per adult cost €4, and €2 per child; luggage is €2. You can make a more leisurely upward trip by donkey (tickets cost €4).

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

A car is the best way to explore the island during high season, when buses are intolerably overcrowded and you're lucky to get on one at all. Be very patient and cautious when driving – the narrow roads, especially in Fira, can be a nightmare. Note that Oia has no petrol station, the nearest being just outside Fira.

Two very good local rental outfits are **Dami-gos Rent a Car** (☎ 22860 22048, 6979968192) and for scooters, **Zerbakis** (☎ 22860 33329, 6944531992).

TAXI

If you're after a **taxi** (☎ 22860 23951/2555), there's a stand in the main square. A taxi from the

port of Athinios to Fira costs €10, and a trip from Fira to Oia is also €10. Both cost €12 if you call ahead by telephone. If you miss the last bus from Oia to Fira, three or four people can bargain for a shared taxi for about €12.

FIRA ΦHPA

pop 2113

A multitude of fellow admirers cannot diminish the impact of Fira's stupendous landscape. Views from the edge of the caldera over the multicoloured cliffs are breathtaking, and at night the caldera edge is a frozen cascade of lights that eclipses the displays of the jewellery shops in the streets behind.

Orientation

The central square is Plateia Theotokopoulou. It's a fairly crowded, chaotic place; the main road, 25 Martiou, intersects the square as part of a one-way system that just manages to keep the nonstop traffic flow going. The **bus station** (25 Mitropoleos) is 150m south of Plateia Theotokopoulou. Between 25 Martiou and the caldera is the essence of Fira, a network of pedestrianised alleyways, the main ones running parallel to Martiou. Erythrou Stavrou is the main commercial thoroughfare.

A block west of Erythrou Stavrou is Ypantantis, whose southern section is known also as Gold St because of its many jewellers. It runs along the edge of the caldera and has superb panoramic views until the shops intrude. Below the edge of the caldera is the paved walkway of Agiou Mina, which heads north and merges eventually with the cliff-top walkway that continues north past the villages of Firotsefani and Imerovigli. Keep going and you'll reach Oia; but it's a long, hot 8km.

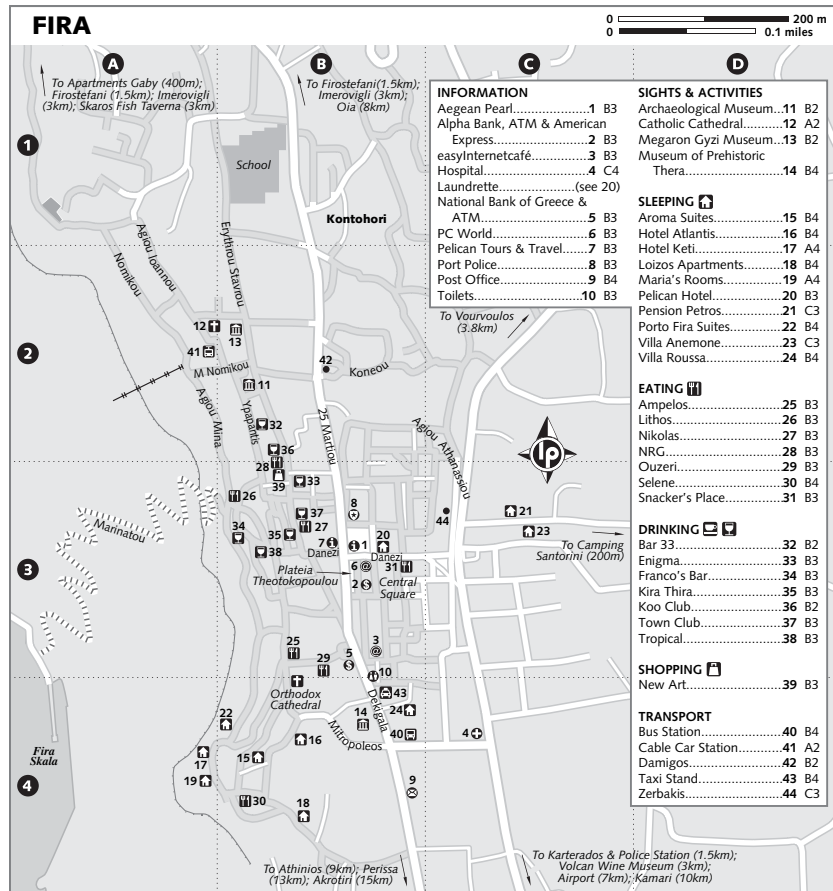
Information

Fira doesn't have an EOT (Greek National Tourist Organisation) or tourist police. It's best to seek out the smaller travel agents in the town, where you'll receive helpful service.

There are toilets near the taxi rank. You may need to brace yourself (they're of squat vintage). Bring your own paper – but not to read.

EMERGENCY

Hospital (☎ 22860 22237) On the road to Kamari.
Police station (☎ 22860 22649; Karterados) About 2km from Fira.

**INFORMATION**

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easyInternetcafé.....	3	B3
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Catholic Cathedral.....	12	A2
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Hotel Atlantis.....	16	B4
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Maria's Rooms.....	19	A4
Pelican Hotel.....	20	B3
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Enigma.....	33	B3
Franco's Bar.....	34	B3
Kira Thira.....	35	B3
Koo Club.....	36	B2
Town Club.....	37	B3
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TRANSPORT

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Cable Car Station.....	41	A2
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Port police (☎ 22860 22239; 25 Martiou) North of the square.

INTERNET ACCESS

PC World (☎ 22860 25551; Central Sq; per 30min €1.30; ☎ 10am-2am May-Oct, 10am-10pm Nov-Apr) A good range of services.

easyInternetcafé (25 Martiou; per hr €2.70) Self-service net connect, and wi-fi. Purchase a timed ticket from a coin machine – minimum charge is €1.

LAUNDRY

Laundrette (Danezi; average load wash & dry €6) Next to Pelican Hotel.

LEFT LUGGAGE

Laundrette (Danezi; locked luggage storage per 24hrs €1.50)

MONEY

There are numerous ATMs scattered around town.

Alpha Bank (Plateia Theotokopoulou) Represents American Express and has an ATM.

National Bank of Greece (Dekigala) Between the bus station and Plateia Theotokopoulou, on the caldera side of the road. Has an ATM.

POST

Post office (Dekigala)

TRAVEL AGENCIES

Aegean Pearl (☎ 22860 22170; www.aptravel.gr; Danezi) An excellent, helpful agency that sells all travel tickets and can help with accommodation, car rental and excursions.

Pelican Tours & Travel (☎ 22860 22220; fax 22860 22570; Plateia Theotokopoulou) Sells ferry tickets and books accommodation and excursions.

Sights & Activities MUSEUMS

Near the bus station, the **Museum of Prehistoric Thera** (☎ 22860 23217; Mitropoleos; admission €3; ☎ 8.30am-3pm Tue-Sun) houses extraordinary finds that were excavated from Akrotiri (where, to date, only 5% of the area has been excavated). Most impressive is the glowing gold ibex figurine, measuring around 10cm in length and dating from the 17th century BC. Many of Akrotiri's fascinating wall paintings are on display.

The **Archaeological Museum** (☎ 22860 22217; M Nomikou; adult/student €3/free; ☎ 8.30am-3pm Tue-Sun), near the cable-car station, houses finds from Akrotiri and Ancient Thira, some Cycladic figurines, and Hellenistic and Roman sculptures.

Behind the Catholic cathedral, **Megaron Gyzi Museum** (☎ 22860 22244; Agiou Ioannou; adult/concession €3.50/2; ☎ 10.30am-1pm & 5-8pm Mon-Sat, 10.30am-4.30pm Sun May-Oct) has local memorabilia, including fascinating photographs of Fira before and immediately after the 1956 earthquake.

If you fancy a great professional photography course, based on Santorini, contact **Greek Island Workshops** (www.glensteiner.com). It's run by top professional Glenn Steiner.

Tours

Tour companies operate various trips including a bus-and-boat tour (€40), which lasts from four to eight hours depending on the itinerary and takes in Thirasia, the volcanic island of Nea Kameni, Palia Kameni's hot springs and Oia; book at travel agencies.

The *Bella Aurora*, an exact copy of an 18th-century schooner, scoots around the caldera every afternoon on a sunset buffet dinner tour (€42, from May to October), stopping for sightseeing on Nea Kameni and for ouzo on Thirasia. Most travel agencies sell tickets.

Sleeping BUDGET

Few of Fira's sleeping options are cheap, and even budget places hike their prices in July and August. Domatia touts at the port reach impressive heights of hysteria in their bids for attention. Some claim their rooms are in

town, when they're actually a long way out; be tough and ask to see a map showing the exact location. If you're looking for a caldera view, expect to pay at least double the prices of elsewhere. Many hotels in Fira, especially on the caldera rim, cannot be reached by vehicle. If you have heavy luggage, this is worth remembering.

Camping Santorini (☎ 22860 22944; www.santorinincamping.gr; camp sites per adult/child/tent €9/4/4; ☎) Located on the eastern outskirts of town, this camping ground has some shade and decent facilities. There's a self-service restaurant, minimarket and pool. It's 400m east of Plateia Theotokopoulou. There are camping bungalows also; enquire about prices.

Also recommended:

Villa Roussa (☎ 22860 23220; Dekigala; s/d €50/60) Convenient and near the centre.

Pension Petros (☎ 22860 22573; www.astirthira.gr; s/d/tr €50/60/75; ☎) Decent rooms, though not much of a view. On the way to the campsite. Head down Danezi, turn left and then right.

MIDRANGE

Loizos Apartments (☎ 22860 24046; www.loizos.gr; s €60, d €65-80, apt €140; ☎) Unbeatable value and friendly, helpful management make this one of the best places in Fira. Loizos is in a quiet location and only minutes from the centre of town and the caldera edge. Rooms are bright, clean and comfortable and those on the front upper floor have a panoramic view towards Kamari and the sea. Breakfast is €5. The same owners have similar, but cheaper accommodation at Messaria, 2.5km southeast of Fira.

Apartments Gaby (☎ 22860 22057; Nomikou; d €65-85, tw €100, apt €120) The rooms on the series of roof terraces at this excellent place guarantee fantastic sunset views, and there's a reassuring local feel that transcends Fira's surface gloss. Gaby is just beyond the convention centre on the caldera-edge path where it reaches Firostefani.

Pelican Hotel (☎ 22860 23113; www.pelican.gr; Danezi; s/d/tr incl breakfast €68/84/100; ☎) A smart refurbishment in recent years has made Pelican a good value choice. There's no caldera view, but rooms are comfy and well appointed.

Maria's Rooms (☎ 22860 25143, 6973254461; Agiou Mina; d €70; ☎) A handful of charming rooms open onto a shared terrace that offers unbeatable caldera and sunset views. Rooms are small but immaculate, and are blissfully peaceful.

Hotel Keti (☎ 22860 22324; www.hotelketi.gr; Agiou Mina; d €80-100, tr €105; 🍴) Recently refurbished, Hotel Keti is one of the smaller 'sunset view' hotels in a peaceful caldera niche. Its attractive traditional rooms are carved into the cliffs. Half of the rooms have Jacuzzis.

our pick Aroma Suites (☎ 22860 24112; www.aromasuites.gr; Agiou Mina; s €100, d €120-160) Opened in recent years at the quieter end of the caldera edge, this delightful boutique hotel has charming owners to match. Stylish modern facilities enhance traditional caldera interiors such as the honeymoon suite: a classic Fira cave chamber, complete with Jacuzzi. Rates are substantially reduced in low season.

Villa Anemone (☎ 22860 22573; www.astirthira.gr; s/d/tr €60/70/80) is run by the same family that operates nearby Pension Petros (see Budget, p427). On the way to the campsite. Head down Danezi, turn left and then right.

TOP END

Hotel Atlantis (☎ 22860 22232; www.atlantishotel.gr; Mitropoleos; s/d incl breakfast €200/284; 🍴 🍷 🚿) The Atlantis is a handsome old building that overlooks the southern end of Ypapantis with a flourish. It's full of cool, relaxing lounges and terraces, and the bright and airy bedrooms in the front have caldera views.

Porto Fira Suites (☎ 22860 22849; www.portofira.gr; Agiou Mina; 2-4-person ste incl breakfast €297-439; 🍴 🍷 🚿) Luxury on the edge is the keynote of this top-rated Fira hotel that merges tradition with all the modern conveniences. Rooms are stylishly furnished and have huge stone-based beds and Jacuzzis. There's a bar and café.

Eating

Tourist-trap eateries, often with overpriced, indifferent food, are still an unfortunate feature of summertime Fira. In some places singles, and even families with young children, may find themselves unwelcome in the face of pushy owners desperate to keep tables full and their turnover brisk. However, there are excellent exceptions.

BUDGET

Snacker's Place (☎ 22860 22538; Danezi; snacks €1-2.30) A snack bar and takeaway that dishes out a terrific range of tasty sandwiches, wraps and other snacks as well as hot and cold drinks.

NRG (☎ 22860 24997; Erythrou Stavrou; dishes €2.20-6.20) This popular little creperie right at the heart of the action is a Fira institution. As well

as delicious crepes, it also does sandwiches, tortillas, an ever-popular Indian curry (€4.80), ice cream, coffee and smoothies.

our pick Ouzeri (☎ 6945849921; Fabrika Shopping Centre; dishes €3-14.50) A complete refurbishment in 2007 reflected the popularity of this great *mezedhopoleio*. Its fish dishes are especially good, including prawn saganaki and a sea platter of mixed fish. Equally tasty meat dishes, including *tigania* (pork in wine with yogurt), will satisfy meat eaters while vegetarians can enjoy salads and a variety of nonmeat starters.

Nikolas (☎ 22860 24550; Erythrou Stavrou; dishes €6-10) A long-established restaurant at the heart of Fira offering traditional Greek cuisine such as stuffed zucchini and cuttlefish in wine.

Skaros Fish Taverna (☎ 22860 23616; dishes €8.50-16) You can escape Fira's seductive grip by heading north along the caldera edge to this long-established restaurant. Dishes such as seafood salad or pork fillet in Vinsanto are worth it – and so is the fantastic view.

There are several *gyros* stands in and around the main square.

MIDRANGE

Lithos (☎ 22860 24421; Agiou Mina; mains €7-19.50) Amid a swath of eateries on the caldera edge, Lithos stands out for its well-prepared dishes and friendly service. Choose from persuasive starters such as fava with cheese and cherry tomatoes; salads are crisp and fresh and mains cover poultry, meat, fish and shellfish dishes.

Ampelos (☎ 22860 25554; Fabrika Shopping Centre; mains €8-22) Dine with a view from the big upstairs space at this fine restaurant. Enjoy a flavourful chicken soup with egg and lemon, or the 'Ampelos Pie' with its mix of green onion, dill, pine nuts and Parmesan. Main dishes range across meat, poultry and fish and are all prepared with traditional (and a dash of Californian) style. The house wine is worthwhile at €7 per half-litre, while excellent Greek reds and whites are €16 to €45 per bottle.

Selene (☎ 22860 22249; Agiou Mina; dishes €23-26) There's fashionable, pricey cuisine at Selene, but if you're not into the prices or the sea urchin salad on artichoke heart, or fish and langoustine soup, you can at least gaze down at this top restaurant's sunset-aligned terrace from a public walkway on a higher level. Mains are a rich choice of meat and fish dishes such as cod in green pepper with saffron sauce.

SANTORINI WINES

Santorini's two lauded wines are its crisp, clear dry whites, and the amber-coloured, unfortified dessert wine Vinsanto. Most local vineyards hold tastings and tours.

The atmospheric **Volcan Wine Museum** (☎ 22860 31322; www.volcanwines.gr; admission €5; 🕒 noon-8pm), housed in a traditional *canava* (winery) on the way to Kamari, has some interesting displays, including a 17th-century wooden winepress. Admission to the museum includes three tastings. On Sunday nights there's a traditional Greek night with a buffet, local dancers and the added spice of belly dancing.

There's also the Art Space gallery-winery outside Kamari – see p431.

The following should be contacted before visiting:

Boutari (☎ 22860 81011; www.boutari.gr; Megalohori)

Canava Roussos (☎ 22860 31349; www.canavaroussos.gr; Mesa Gonia)

Hatzidakis (☎ 22860 32552; www.hatzidakiswines.gr; Pyrgos Kallistis)

Santo Wines (☎ 22860 22596; www.santowines.gr; Pyrgos)

Sigalas (☎ 22860 71644; www.sigalas-wine.gr; Oia)

Drinking

Be ready to fork out some hefty prices, even for a beer, in the Fira clubs and bars (and check out the stellar cocktail prices). You're often paying for the view, so don't glaze over too early.

Kira Thira (☎ 22860 22770; Erythrou Stavrou) The oldest bar in Fira and one of the best. There are entrances from the streets on either side. Locals always use the same one. Guess which and you'll feel even more at home in this candle-lit bar with its smooth jazz, ethnic sounds and occasional live music.

Tropical (☎ 22860 23089; Marinatou) A seductive mix of rock, soul and occasional jazz, plus unbeatable balcony views, make this friendly bar a top Fira favourite. A stylish local crew and international crowd keep things going into the early hours.

Franco's Bar (☎ 22860 24428; Marinatou) Things move at a cooler pace at this ultimate sunset venue simply because of its sheer elegance and impeccable musical taste – it's always classical sounds here. Expensive cocktails with expensive names (Maria Callas, for starters) match the style.

Entertainment

After midnight Erythrou Stavrou fires up the clubbing caldera of Fira.

Koo Club (☎ 22860 22025; Erythrou Stavrou) Five bars with switching ambience through well-spaced levels make this a popular place with locals and visitors alike. Sounds are mainstream and Greek hits with a touch of hip-hop.

Town Club (☎ 22860 22820; Erythrou Stavrou) Modern Greek music and mainstream are just

right for the charmingly kitsch landscape of this upbeat place.

Enigma (☎ 22860 22466; Erythrou Stavrou) Frontline fashionistas sashay round the cool white walls and muslin drapes to house and mainstream hits.

Bar 33 (☎ 22860 23065; Erythrou Stavrou) A lively bouzouki place in classic Thira barrel-roofed surroundings.

Shopping

So much shopping, so little time – this is the mantra of the hordes of cruise ship passengers who forage happily through Fira's glitzy retail zones. You can get everything from Armani and Versace to Timberland and Reef – at rather glitzy prices, too.

Fira's jewellery and gold shops are legion. The merchandise gleams and sparkles, and prices are high.

New Art (☎ 22860 23770; Erythrou Stavrou) If you want something different to sport back home, the quality T-shirts of designer Werner Hempel have real style.

Grapes thrive in Santorini's volcanic soil, and the island's wines are famous all over Greece and beyond. Local wines are widely available in Fira and elsewhere. **Sigalas Argyris** (La Cava; ☎ 22860 22802) in Firostefani has a good selection of wines and local delicacies, such as caper leaves and thyme honey.

AROUND SANTORINI

Oia Oia

pop 763

The village of Oia (*ee-ah*), known locally as Pano Meria, was so devastated by the 1956

earthquake that it became something of a ghost town for a while. However, there is little evidence of that period because good restoration work and upmarket tourism have transformed Oia into an attractive place. Though quieter than tourist-frenzied Fira, its streets still have their share of trendy boutiques and expensive jewellery shops. Built on a steep slope of the caldera, many of its dwellings nestle in niches hewn into the volcanic rock. Oia, believe it or not, gets more sunset time than Fira, and its narrow passageways get crowded in the evenings.

ORIENTATION & INFORMATION

From the bus terminal, head left and uphill to reach the rather stark central square and the main street, Nikolaou Nomikou, which skirts the caldera. There is also an ATM by the bus terminal shelter.

Alpha Bank Branches on Main St, near the blue-domed church, and outside Karvounis Tours. With ATM.

Atlantis Books (☎ 22860 72346; www.atlantisbooks.org; Nikolaou Nomikou) A fascinating and well-stocked little bookshop run with flair and enthusiasm by an international group of young people. Cultural events, for a small number of people, are sometimes staged here.

Karvounis Tours (☎ 22860 71290; www.idgreece.com; Nikolaou Nomikou) For obtaining information, booking hotels, renting cars and bikes, and making international calls. It's also a wedding specialist.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

The **maritime museum** (☎ 22860 71156; adult/student €3/1.50; ☎ 10am-2pm & 5-8pm Wed-Mon) is housed in an old mansion and has entertaining displays on Santorini's maritime history. It is located along a narrow lane that leads off right from Nikolaou Nomikou about 100m south of the Museum Hotel.

Ammoudi, a tiny port with good tavernas and colourful fishing boats, lies 300 steps below Oia. In summer, boats and tours go from Ammoudi to Thirasia daily; check with travel agencies in Fira (p426) for departure times.

SLEEPING

Oia Youth Hostel (☎ 22860 71465; www.santorinihostel.gr; dm incl breakfast €17; ☎ May-mid-Oct) Exceptionally clean and well run, this hostel has better facilities than some hotels. It has a small bar and a lovely rooftop terrace with great views. To find it, head on from the bus terminus for about 100m.

Chelidonia (☎ 22860 71287; www.chelidonia.com; Nikolaou Nomikou; studios €145 apt €170-205; ☎ ☎) Buried beneath the rubble of the 1956 earthquake, these cliff-side dwellings have been lovingly restored by the friendly and helpful owner, who was born here. Furnishings are a pleasant mix of traditional and modern, and each unit has a kitchenette.

Katikies (☎ 22860 71401; katikies@otenet.gr; Nikolaou Nomikou; d €245, studios incl champagne breakfast €290-750; ☎ ☎ ☎) One of Santorini's most beautiful hotels, Katikies is at the east end of the village, just below the main street. It revels in luxury and its cliff-edge pool is spectacular. Rooms here are traditional-chic and super swish.

EATING & DRINKING

1800 (☎ 22860 71485; Nikolaou Nomikou; dishes €13-29; ☎ 6.30-11.30pm) A former sea captain's house is now a temple to slow food. There's a magical use of herbs and subtle sauces to produce such gastro-delights as fillet of sea bream with cherry tomatoes, olives and baked fennel. The stylish dining room and terrace-patio add to the pleasure.

Edwin Polski Lokal (☎ 22860 71971; dishes €6.50-15) Popular and unreservedly nonglam, this little place does tasty salads, plates and home-cooked gyros. It has a sister establishment, Pizza Edwin, near the bus terminal.

Skala (☎ 22860 71362; Nikolaou Nomikou; dishes €8-14) A caldera-view terrace enhances Skala's fine traditional cuisine, which adds international touches to such treats as chicken fillet stuffed with mushrooms, or pork in honey and beer.

Kamari Καμάρι

pop 1351

Kamari is 10km from Fira and is Santorini's best-developed resort. It has a long beach of black sand, with the rugged limestone cliffs of Cape Mesa Vouno framing its southern end. The beachfront road is dense with restaurants and bars. Things get very busy in high season. Other less-appealing, but quieter, beaches lie to the north at Monolithos.

Lisos Tours (☎ 22860 33765; lisostours@san.forthnet.gr) is especially helpful – and knowledgeable about Santorini – and has an office on the main road into Kamari, and another just inland from the centre of the beach. Staff sell ferry tickets and can organise accommodation and car rental. All kinds of tours can be arranged through Lisos Tours, including fixed-wing flights over the caldera, horse rid-

ing and kayaking. There's internet access and a bureau de change.

The unmissable gallery and winery **Art Space** (☎ 22860 32774; Exo Gonia) is just outside Kamari. It is located in Argyro's Canava, one of the oldest wineries on the island. The atmospheric old wine caverns are hung with superb artworks while sculptures transform lost corners and niches. The collection is curated by the owner and features some of Greece's finest modern artists. Winemaking is still in the owner's blood, so a tasting of his Vinsanto greatly enhances the whole experience.

Kamari is fast becoming Santorini's Cine City with two movie venues. The long-established **Cinema Kamari** (☎ 22860 31974; www.cinekamari.gr), on the main road coming into Kamari, is a great open-air theatre that's set in a thicket of trees. It shows new releases at 9.30pm daily and midnight on Monday and Wednesday. In July it hosts the three-day **Santorini Jazz Festival** (☎ 22860 33452; www.jazzfestival.gr), featuring performances by Greek and foreign musicians. In Kamari Shopping Centre is the covered **Villaggio Cinema** (☎ 22860 32800; www.villaggiocinema.gr), showing films at 8.30pm.

SLEEPING

Anna's Rooms (☎ 22860 22765; s/d €25/35) Unbeatable budget deals can be had at these straightforward rooms. One group of rooms is behind Lisos Tours at the back of town; the other is behind Lisos' office in the village.

Boathouse Hotel (☎ 22860 33477; www.boathousehotel.com; s/d/tr incl breakfast €60/80/96; ☎ ☎ ☎) Located near the quieter north end of the beach, these bright, spacious and well-equipped rooms are in a handsome building just across from the beach.

our pick Aegean View Hotel (☎ 22860 32790; www.aegeanview-santorini.com; studios/apt €130/150; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) High on a hill, this outstanding place spreads over several levels below sculpted cliffs. It has terrific views out over Kamari to the sea and to distant Anafi. The spacious studios and apartments are superbly laid out and have 1st-class facilities, including small kitchen areas. Head up the steep road that leads to Ancient Thira and the hotel is easily located on the right, beneath steep cliffs.

Also recommended:

Hotel Selini (☎ /fax 22860 32625; s/d incl breakfast €35/45) Reliable, family-run hotel. Rooms are a good size and the hotel is just a few blocks in from Kamari beach.

Hotel Matina (☎ 22860 31491; www.hotel-matina.com; s/d incl breakfast €92/100; ☎ ☎ ☎) Spacious, brightly decorated rooms and a convenient location make this year-round hotel a good choice.

EATING

Amalthia (☎ 22860 32780; dishes €3.50-12) A long-established local favourite. Amalthia is a couple of blocks inland at the southern end of town, and there's a lovely garden area and a terrace with barbecue. Friendly service goes with well-prepared Greek dishes; the lamb is particularly good. It also prepares very tasty pastas.

Eanos (☎ 22860 31161; dishes €4.50-14.80) Full of character – and characters – this long-running taverna, near the south end of the waterfront, does excellent Greek dishes, including terrific *mousakas*. Food is cooked on a wood-burning stove and pasta is also on offer.

Almira (☎ 22860 33477; mains €7-15.50) Adjacent to the Boathouse Hotel, the Almira offers an excellent range of fish, poultry and meat dishes, with lamb a speciality. Or you could try the 'drunken' chicken, in wine with tagliatelle.

our pick Mario No 1 (☎ 22860 32000; Agia Paraskevi, Monolithos; dishes €5.50-12) Right on the beach at Monolithos, this big, well-run restaurant has a terrific take on fish cuisine. Fish is by the kilo and you can select shellfish from a display. There's a great selection of meat and vegetarian dishes as well.

Ancient Thira Αρχαία Θήρα

First settled by the Dorians in the 9th century BC, **Ancient Thira** (admission €4; ☎ 8am-2.30pm) consists of Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine ruins. The ruins include temples, houses with mosaics, an *agora* (market), a theatre and a gymnasium. There are splendid views from the site.

If you're driving, take the narrow, winding road from Kamari just over 1km. From Perissa, it takes about 45 minutes to walk to the site, along a path, on rocky, difficult ground.

Ancient Akrotiri Αρχαίο Ακρωτήρι

Excavations at **Akrotiri** (☎ 22860 81366), the Minoan outpost that was buried during the catastrophic eruption of 1650 BC, began in 1967 and have uncovered an ancient city beneath the volcanic ash. Buildings, some three storeys high, date back to the late 16th century BC. Outstanding finds are the stunning frescoes

and ceramics, many of which are now on display at the Museum of Prehistoric Thera (p427) in Fira.

At the time of writing the site was closed indefinitely, pending completion of an official investigation – one visitor was killed and several others injured when a section of the roof collapsed during the summer of 2005. You may find that there is a degree of confusion locally about whether or not the site is open. Check the ‘archaeological sites’ section of www.culture.gr and check thoroughly on arrival at Santorini before making a bus or taxi journey to what may still be a closed site.

Beaches

At times Santorini’s black-sand beaches become so hot that a sun lounger or mat is essential. The best beaches are on the east coast.

One of the main beaches is the long stretch at **Perissa**, a popular destination in summer. **Perivolos** and **Agios Georgios**, further south, are more relaxed. **Red Beach**, near Ancient Akrotiri, has high red cliffs and smooth, hand-sized pebbles submerged under clear water. **Vlyhada**, also on the south coast, is a pleasant venue. On the north coast near Oia, **Paradise** and **Pori** are both worth a stop.

Based at Perissa and Akrotiri Beach is the **Santorini Dive Centre** (☎ 22860 83190; www.divecenter.gr), offering a good range of courses including ‘discover scuba diving’ for €55, half-day snorkelling for €40 and a full open-water diving course for €380.

SLEEPING & EATING

The main concentration of rooms can be found in and around Perissa.

Hostel Anna (☎ 22860 81456; annayh@otenet.gr; dm €10, d €20; ☒ Feb-Oct; 📺) Recently renovated and under new management, Anna’s is a friendly, popular hostel at the entrance to Perissa, and is a great place to meet fellow travellers. A minibus picks up guests from the ferry port.

Hotel Drossos (☎ 22860 81639; www.familydrossos.gr; s/d/tr incl breakfast €85/97/133; 📺 📺 📺) Behind the simple façade of this fine hotel lies a beautiful complex of rooms and studios. Rooms have stylish décor and furnishings and the service is courteous and friendly. Rates quoted rise by about 20% for the first three weeks of August and drop substantially outside summer.

Also recommended:

Stelio’s Place (☎ 22860 81860; www.steliosplace.com; s/d/tr €50/60/75; 📺 📺 📺) Family-operated and close to the beach. A bright, well-run, friendly place.

Valvis (☎ 22860 81583; d/tr €67/73, ste €83-99; 📺 📺 📺) Modern hotel with decent-sized rooms and good facilities.

There’s a reliable Greek food on offer at **God’s Garden** (☎ 22860 83027; dishes €3.50-9), a decent taverna with fish dishes starting at €6.

Most beaches have a range of tavernas and cafés.

THIRASIA & VOLCANIC ISLETS ΘΗΡΑΣΙΑ & ΦΩΑΙΣΤΕΙΑΚΕΣ ΝΗΣΙΔΕΣ

Unspoilt Thirasia was separated from Santorini by an eruption in 236 BC. The cliff-top *hora*, **Manolas**, has tavernas and domatia. It’s an attractive place, noticeably more relaxed and reflective than Fira could ever be.

The *Nisos Thira* leaves Athinios port for Thirasia on Monday and Friday, and on Wednesday mornings, but does not return to Santorini. Tickets are available only at the port. Take care of youngsters when on the upper deck near the rails (which have some child-sized gaps, especially on the port side). There are also morning and afternoon boats to Thirasia from Oia’s port of Ammoudi.

The islets of **Palia Kameni** and **Nea Kameni** are still volcanically active and can be visited on half-day excursions from Fira Skala and Athinios. Two-hour trips to Nea Kameni are also possible. A day’s excursion taking in Nea Kameni, the **hot springs** on Palia Kameni, Thirasia and Oia is about €28.

ANAFI ΑΝΑΦΗ

pop 272

Be ready to linger in this persuasive little island that lies well outside the mainstream and offers a perfect antidote to Santorini’s fast-paced glitz. The rewards of Anafi include there being few other visitors (outside busy August, at least), a slow-paced traditional lifestyle and striking Cycladic landscapes.

The island’s small port is **Agios Nikolaos**, where recent work has improved the quay. From here, the main village, **Hora**, is a 10-minute bus ride up a winding road, or a steep 1km hike up a less-winding walkway. In summer a bus runs every two hours from about

9am to 11pm and usually meets boats. Hora’s main pedestrian thoroughfare leads uphill from the first bus stop and has most of the domatia, restaurants and minimarkets.

There is a postal agency that opens occasionally, next to Panorama rooms at the entrance to Hora. In 2007 it was announced that Anafi is to have an ATM installed in the near future.

Jeyzed Travel (☎ 22860 61253; jeyzed@san.forthnet.gr), halfway along Hora’s main street, sells ferry tickets, exchanges money, can help with accommodation and rents out motorbikes. It also has internet access.

There are several lovely beaches near Agios Nikolaos. Palm-lined **Klissidi**, a 1½km walk to the port, is the closest and most popular.

Anafi’s main sight is the monastery of **Moni Kalamiotissas**, a 6km walk from Hora in the extreme east of the island, near the meagre remains of a **sanctuary to Apollo**. At 470m, **Monastery Rock** is the highest rock formation in the Mediterranean Sea, outstripping even Gibraltar. There is also a ruined Venetian *kastro* at **Kastelli**, east of Hora.

Sleeping & Eating

Camping is tolerated at Klissidi Beach, but the only facilities are at nearby tavernas. Domatia owners prefer long stays, so if you’re only staying one night you should take whatever you can get. In high season, contact Jeyzed Travel in advance to be sure of a room; places at Klissidi fill fast.

Villa Apollon (☎ 22860 61348; www.apollonvilla.gr; s/d/tr €45/58/68, studios €54-78; 📺) At Klissidi Beach,

these pleasant rooms are a good size and have an authentic traditional style.

Rooms to Let Artemis (☎ 22860 61235; d €45) These are just above the sea at Klissidi, and there’s a restaurant attached.

Rooms in Hora are all very similar. Many have good views across Anafi’s rolling hills to the sea and to the great summit of Monastery Rock. The following recommended options are easily found on the main street, and all charge about €35 or €45 for a single or double:

Panorama (☎ 22860 61292)

Paradise (☎ 22860 61243)

Anafi Rooms (☎ 22860 61271)

There are several tavernas in Hora, all of which are in the main street. **Liotrivi** (☎ 22860 61209; mains €4-6) offers great fish dishes with the catch supplied from the family’s boat. Cheerful, homely **Astrakhan** (☎ 22860 61249; mains €4.50-7), further along the street, serves up reliable Greek standards as if you’re part of the family.

Klissidi has a few tavernas, with similar prices.

Getting There & Away

There are at least seven ferries weekly to Santorini (€6.90, 1½ hours), six ferries weekly to Ios (€7.90, 3½ hours), Folegandros (€10.10, 4½ hours) and Sikinos (€9.30, 4¼ hours), three ferries weekly to Naxos (€11, seven hours), Paros (€13.80, nine hours) and Piraeus (€34, 17 hours), and two weekly to Syros (€16.80, 12 hours).

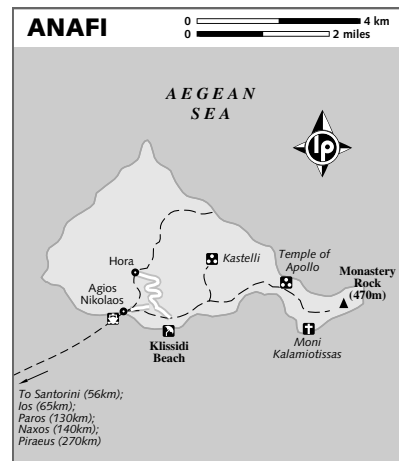
Getting Around

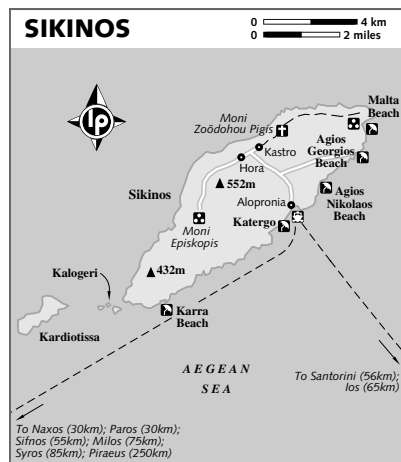
A small bus takes passengers from the port up to Hora. Caiques serve various beaches and nearby islands.

SIKINOS ΣΙΚΙΝΟΣ

pop 238

Out of the way Sikinos (*see-kee-noss*) is another wonderful escape from the clamour of Ios and Santorini, yet this lovely island is not much smaller than Santorini. It has a mainly empty landscape of terraced hills that sweep down to the sea. The main clusters of habitation are the port of **Alopronia**, and the inland villages of **Hora** and **Kastro**. The latter are reached by a 3.4km winding road that leads up from the port. There’s a post office at the entrance





to Kastro, and a National Bank of Greece ATM with card-slot access in the central square. The medical centre is next door to the ATM. Ferry tickets can be bought in advance at **Koundouris Travel** (☎ 22860 51168, 6936621946) in Kastro and also down at the port before scheduled departures. There is a petrol station outside Alopronia on the road to Kastro. You can hire scooters here from about €15.

Sights

Kastro, so named from an original Venetian fortress of the 13th century of which little physical sign remains, is a charming place, with winding alleyways between brilliant white houses. At its heart is the main square with a central war memorial surrounded by peaceful old buildings, one with ornate stone window-frames and -sills long since whitewashed over. On one side is the **church of Pantanassa**. On the northern side of Kastro, the land falls sharply to the sea and the shells of old windmills punctuate the cliff edge. A flight of whitewashed steps leads up to the once-fortified church of **Moni Zoōdohou Pigis** above the town.

To the west of Kastro, above steeply terraced fields and reached by an equally steep flight of steps, is the reclusive **Hora**, where numerous derelict houses are being renovated. If you continue past a telephone booth from the little main square you come to an olive press museum down flower-lined steps on the left. Opening times in summer are satisfyingly random.

From the saddle between Kastro and Hora, a surfaced road leads southwest to Episkopi. The remains here are believed to be those of a 3rd-century-AD Roman mausoleum that was transformed into a church in the 7th century and then became **Moni Episkopis** (admission free; ☎ 6.30pm-8.30pm) 10 centuries later. From here you can climb to a little **church and ancient ruins** perched on a precipice to the south, from where the views are spectacular.

Caïques (about €4) run to good beaches at **Agios Georgios, Malta** – with ancient ruins on the hill above – and **Karra. Katergo**, a swimming place with interesting rocks, and **Agios Nikolaos Beach** are both within easy walking distance of Alopronia.

At the time of writing, a surfaced road was being laid to Agios Georgios and beach. It is expected that buses will run to these beaches from Alopronia in summer.

Sleeping & Eating

In Hora and Kastro there are a few basic domatia that charge about €40 for a double. Ask at tavernas and the local shop. For a taste of old Greece, **Zagoreos Rooms** (☎ 22860 51263; €40) on the little terrace square in Hora is worth a try. Otherwise, Alopronia has most of the accommodation.

Lucas Rooms (☎ 22860 51076; www.diakopes.gr; Alopronia; s/d/studios €35/50/70) Two good locations are on offer here and rooms are decent and clean; one set of rooms is on the hillside, 500m uphill from the port. The studios are on the far side of the bay from the ferry quay and have great views.

Porto Sikinos (☎ 22860 51220; www.portosikinos.gr; Alopronia; s/d/tr incl breakfast €80/99/115) Just up from the quay, the attractive rooms here rise in a series of terraces and have great balcony views. There's also a bar and restaurant.

Rock (☎ 22860 51186; Alopronia; dishes €2.60-7.50) High above the ferry quay is this cheerful seasonal café and pizza place, where you can also chill into the early hours (sometimes to live music). There are rooms here as well, with doubles priced at €40 to €45.

Lucas (☎ 22860 51076; Alopronia; dishes €3.50-7) Down at the port, this is the favourite taverna, offering Greek standards without frills.

To Steki tou Garbi (Kastro; dishes €4-8) A good traditional grill house just around the corner from Koundouris Travel in Kastro.

To Iliovasilima (☎ 22860 51173; mains €5-9) Outstanding views enhance a stop at this seasonal

place, which dishes up standards as well as pizzas and pasta.

There's a minimarket next to Lucas and another in Kastro.

Getting There & Away

Seven ferries weekly go to Piraeus (€26.10, 11 hours) and six weekly go to Santorini (€6.50, 2½ hours). There are five weekly to Ios (€3.70, 30 minutes); two to Naxos (€6.30, 3½ hours) and Syros (€11.10, eight hours); six to Paros (€7.20 4½ hours); four to Folegandros (€4.30, 45 minutes), Kimolos (€8.20, four hours) and Anafi (€9.10, 4½ hours); three weekly to Milos (€10.90, 3½ hours); and two weekly to Sifnos (€9.50, five hours), Serifos (€11.60, six hours) and Kythnos (€15.20, 8½ hours).

Getting Around

The local bus meets all ferry arrivals and runs between Alopronia and Hora/Kastro (€1.10, 20 minutes) every half-hour in August, but less frequently at other times of the year. A timetable is sometimes posted near the minimarket. It's wise to be in good time at the departure point.

FOLEGANDROS

ΦΟΛΕΓΑΝΔΡΟΣ

pop 662

It's hard to leave Folegandros (*fo-leh-gandross*) and its beauty, its timelessness and its friendly local people. The island is a rocky ridge, barely 12km in length and just under 4km at its widest point. Much of the land is over 200m in height, the highest point being Agios Eleftherios at 414m.

The remoteness and ruggedness of Folegandros made it a place of exile for political prisoners from Roman times to the 20th century, and as late as the military dictatorship of 1967-74.

The capital is the concealed cliff-top Hora, one of the most appealing villages in the Cyclades. Boats dock at the little harbour of Karavostasis, on the east coast. The only other settlement is Ano Meria, 4km northwest of Hora. There are several good beaches, but be prepared for strenuous walking to reach some of them.



Getting There & Away

FAST BOAT & CATAMARAN

From about mid-June to mid-September there are six weekly ferries to Piraeus (€41.50, five hours), Sifnos (€16, 45 minutes), Santorini (€14, 45 minutes), Amorgos (€25, two hours), Naxos (€19, 3¼ hours) and Paros (€16, 3¼ hours).

FERRY

From May to October there are daily services to Piraeus (€26, 11 hours), Santorini (€6.90, 1½ to 2½ hours), Ios (€5.50, 1½ hours), Paros (€7.90, four hours), Naxos (€9.60, three hours) and Sikinos (€4.30, 45 minutes).

Three weekly services go to Syros (€12, five hours), Milos (€7, 2½ hours), Sifnos (€4.30, four hours) and Serifos (€10.30, five hours).

Two weekly ferries go to Kimolos (€5.50, 1½ hours) and Anafi (€12, five hours).

Once weekly there's a ferry to Kythnos (€15, six hours).

Getting Around

The local bus meets all ferry arrivals and takes passengers to Hora (€1.20). From Hora there are buses to the port one hour before all ferry departures, even for the late-night services. Buses from Hora run hourly to Ano Meria (€0.40), stopping at the road leading to Angali Beach. The bus stop for Ano Meria is located on the western edge of Hora, next to the Sotvento Tourism Office.

There is a **taxi service** (☎ 22860 41048, 69446 93957) on Folegandros. You can hire cars also for about €35 to €40 per day, and motorbikes from €15 to €20 per day, from a number of outlets.

KARAVOSTASIS ΚΑΡΑΒΟΣΤΑΣΙΣ

pop 55

Folegandros' port is a sunny little place serviced by a sprinkling of domatia and tavernas, and with a pleasant pebble beach. Within a kilometre north and south of Karavostasis lies a series of other beaches, all enjoyable and easily reached by short walks. In high season boats leave Karavostasis for beaches further afield.

Sleeping & Eating

Camping Livadi (☎ 22860 41204; www.folegandros.org; camp sites per adult/child/tent €6/4/4) This site is at Livadi Beach, 1.2km from Karavostasis. It has a bar-restaurant and laundry. To get

here turn south on the cement road skirting Karavostasis Beach.

Aeolos Beach Hotel (☎ 22860 41205; s/d/studios €45/65/90) Just across from the beach, this friendly hotel has a pretty garden and clean straightforward rooms.

Vrahos (☎ 22860 41450; www.hotel-vrahos.gr; s incl breakfast €68, d incl breakfast €85-98, studios & apt €145-170; 🚻 📺) In a great location at the far end of the beach, Vrahos rises through a series of terraces, and the front balconies have great views of the bay. Rooms have cool décor and there's an outdoor Jacuzzi, a bar and a breakfast area. Breakfast is €12.50.

Restaurant Kati Allo (☎ 22860 41272; dishes €4.50-7) Reliable, traditional dishes are served up at this pleasant place right behind the beach. Seafood is by the kilogram.

Drinking

There are a couple of good beachside bars. For enduring character, Evangelos is right on the beach and is the place for relaxed drinks, snacks and great conversation.

HORA ΧΩΡΑ

pop 316

Hora's medieval *kaastro*, with its attractive main street flanked by lovely traditional houses, is a major feature of Hora, but the rest of the village is a delight also. The meandering main street winds happily from leafy square to leafy square. On its north side, Hora stands on the edge of a formidable cliff.

Orientation

The port-Hora bus turnaround is in the square, called Plateia Pounta. From here follow a road to the left into Plateia Dounavi, from where an archway on the right, the Paraporti, leads into the *kaastro*. Plateia Dounavi leads on to Plateia Kontarini, then to Plateia Piatsa and, finally, to Plateia Maraki. Keep on through Plateia Maraki to reach many of the music bars and the bus stop for Ano Meria and most beaches.

Information

There's no bank, but there is an ATM on the far side of Plateia Dounavi, next to the community offices. The post office is on the port road, 200m downhill from the bus turnaround.

Travel agencies can exchange travellers cheques.

Diaplous Travel (☎ 22860 41158; www.diaploustravel.gr; Plateia Pounta) Helpful and efficient agency – sells ferry tickets, exchanges money and arranges accommodation, car and bike rental and boat excursions. Internet access per 15 minutes costs €1.

Maraki Travel (☎ 22860 41273; fax 22860 41149; Plateia Dounavi; ☎ 10.30am-noon & 5-9pm) Sells ferry tickets and exchanges money.

Medical Centre (☎ 22860 41222; Plateia Pounta)

Police station (☎ 22860 41249) Straight on from Plateia Maraki.

Sotvento Tourism Office (☎ 22860 41444; www.folegandrosisland.com) At the west end of town; doubles as the Italian consulate and is very helpful on all tourism matters, including accommodation, international and domestic flights and boat trips.

Sights

Hora is a pleasure to wander through. The medieval *kaastro*, a tangle of narrow streets spanned by low archways, dates from when Marco Sanudo ruled the island in the 13th century. The houses' wooden balconies blaze with bougainvillea and hibiscus.

The extended village, outside the *kaastro*, is just as attractive. From Plateia Pounta and the bus turnaround, a steep path leads up to the large church of the Virgin, **Panagia** (☎ 6pm-8pm), which sits perched on a dramatic cliff-top above the town.

Tours

Boat trips around the island (per adult/child including lunch €25/10) and to nearby Sikinos (per adult/child €22/11) can be booked through Diaplous Travel and Sotvento Tourism Office.

Festivals & Events

The annual **Folegandros Festival**, staged in late July, features a series of concerts, exhibitions and special meals, at venues around the island.

Sleeping

In July and August most domatia and hotels will be full, so book well in advance.

Hotel Polikandia (☎ 22860 41322; polikandia@yahoo.gr; s/d €65/85; 🚻 📺) Just before the port-Hora bus turnaround, this is a pleasant airy place with good-sized rooms arranged around a delightful reception and flower-filled garden area. Breakfast is €7.50.

Aegeo (☎ 22860 41468; aegeofol@hol.gr; s/d/tr €80/85/110; 🚻 📺) Located on the outskirts of

town, the beautiful rooms with immaculate furnishings are in a peaceful complex here at Aegeo that captures the classic Cycladean style. This style is evident also in its central courtyard area, all white and blue and draped with crimson bougainvillea. The same family has cheaper, but equally immaculate rooms, at Evgenia Rooms on the approach to Plateia Pounta.

Ourpick Anemomylos Apartments (☎ 22860 41309; www.anemomylosapartments.com; d €130-180; 🚻 📺 📺) A prime position on top of a cliff ensures awesome views from the seaward-facing rooms of this stylish complex. Rooms are the ultimate in Cycladic cool, and fine antiques add to the ambience. Anemomylos is just up from the bus turnaround. One unit is equipped for disabled use.

Eating

Melissa (☎ 22860 41067; Plateia Kontarini; mains €4-7.50) A local favourite where good food is matched by charming owners. The island speciality of *matsata* (hand-made pasta) with meat of your choice is always worthwhile and vegetarians will relish the local ingredients in dishes such as *briam*. Melissa also does good breakfasts.

Ourpick Pounta (☎ 22860 41063; Plateia Pounta; dishes €4.50-8) In Pounta's garden setting there's an inescapable sense of old Greece, and the courteous service enhances this. The traditional food is excellent, from tasty breakfasts to evening meals of rabbit stew, lamb and vegetarian dishes. It's all served on delightful crockery made by one of the owners, Lisbet Giouri; you can buy examples of her work.

Zefiros (☎ 22860 41556; dishes €5.50-9.50) A great *ouzerie* and *mezedhopoleio* with a challenging selection of ouzo varieties. There are mezehes plates for two at €20, as well as mixed small plates, all served up cheerfully. Keep left past Plateia Kontarini.

Other recommended places:

Piatsa Restaurant (☎ 22860 41274; dishes €3-7.50) Excellent Greek food such as *matsata*, usually with cockerel or rabbit.

Chic (☎ 22860 41515; dishes €4-9.50) Classic Greek cuisine as well as tasty vegetarian dishes, including spinach pie with cheese, raisins and pine nuts.

Pizza Pazza (☎ 22860 41549; dishes €5.50-10) Above the Greco Cafe-Bar.

To Mikro (☎ 22860 41550) Charming place for coffee, crepes and tasty cakes.

Entertainment

Folegandros has its own 'West End' – a clutch of great music bars at the western edge of Hora.

Greco Café-Bar (☎ 22860 41456) Near the Sotvento Tourism Office, and featuring vivid and appealing murals. The friendly ambience here is enhanced by a great mix of sounds from a stock of over 1000 CDs.

Avli Club (☎ 22860 41100) Near Greco, early evening lounge music gives way to rock, disco, Latin and Greek here, as things liven up into the night.

Apanemo (☎ 22860 41562) Further along the road from Avli Club is this pleasant bar that has a lovely garden.

Further on from Apanemo is a long-established and fine little bar, Laoumi, that plays jazz, ethnic, funk, soul, South American and Caribbean sounds, with style.

A Folegandros local treat is *rakomelo* – heated raki with honey and cloves. One of the best local bars where you can enjoy it and get into the spirit of things is Astarti, next to the Melissa taverna on Plateia Kontarini.

AROUND FOLEGANDROS

Ano Meria Άνο Μεριά

pop 291

The settlement of Ano Meria is a scattered community of small farms and dwellings that stretches for several kilometres. This is traditional island life where tourism makes no intrusive mark and life happily wanders off sideways.

The **folklore museum** (admission €1.50; ☎ 5pm–8pm) is on the eastern outskirts of the village. Ask the bus driver to drop you off nearby.

There are several good traditional tavernas in Ano Meria, including **I Syntantisi** (☎ 22860 41208; dishes €4–8) and **Mimi's** (☎ 22860 41377; dishes €3.50–7), which specialise in *matsata*, the local hand-made pasta dish.

Beaches

For **Livadi Beach**, 1.2km southeast of Karavostasis, follow the signs for Camping Livadi. Further round the coast on the southeastern tip of the island is **Katergo Beach**, best reached by boat from Karavostasis.

The sandy and pebbled **Angali beach**, on the coast opposite to Hora, is a popular spot, but remember that while it's a 1km downhill walk from where the bus drops you off, it's a steep and sweaty hike back up. There are several *domatia* here and two reasonable tavernas.

About 750m over the hill by footpath west of Angali is **Agios Nikolaos**, a nudist beach. **Livadaki beach** is over 2km further west again. It is best reached by another 1.5km hike from the bus stop near the church of Agios Andreas at Ano Meria. Boats connect these west coast beaches in high season. **Agios Georgios** is north of Ano Meria and requires another demanding walk. Have tough footwear, sun protection and, because most beaches have no shops or tavernas, make sure you take food and water.

In July and August, weather permitting, excursion boats make separate trips from Karavostasis to Katergo, Angali and Agios Nikolaos and from Angali to Livadaki beach.

MILOS ΜΗΛΟΣ

pop 4771

Friendly, likeable Milos (*mee-loss*) has a surreal and dramatic coastal landscape with colourful and crazy rock formations that reflect the island's volcanic origins. Milos also has hot springs, the most beaches of any Cycladic island and some compelling ancient sites.

The island has a fascinating history of mineral extraction dating from the Neolithic period when obsidian was an important material. Over the years such materials as sulphur and kaolin have been mined and today Milos is the biggest bentonite and perlite production and processing centre in the EU.

Filakopi, an ancient Minoan city in the island's northeast, was one of the earliest settlements in the Cyclades. During the Peloponnesian Wars, Milos was the only Cycladic island not to join the Athenian alliance. It paid dearly in 416 BC, when avenging Athenians massacred the adult males and enslaved the women and children.

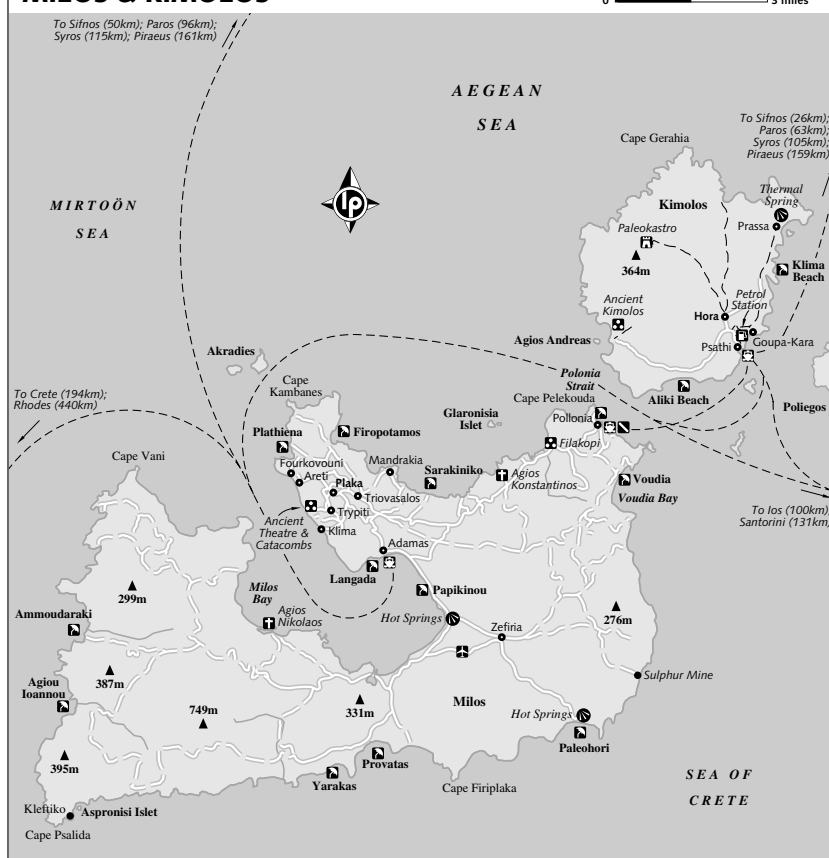
The island's most celebrated export, the beautiful *Venus de Milo* (a 4th-century-BC statue of Aphrodite, found in an olive grove in 1820) is far away in the Louvre (allegedly having lost its arms on the way to Paris in the 19th century).

Getting There & Away

AIR

There is a daily flight to/from Athens (one way €50, 40 minutes) with **Olympic Airlines** (☎ 22870 22380; fax 22870 21884; www.olympicairlines.com; airport), based at the airport. Flights are

MILOS & KIMOLOS



often heavily booked by people in mining and related businesses.

FAST BOAT & CATAMARAN

One boat a day goes to Sifnos (€13.50, 1½ hours) and Serifos (€14, 1½ hours). At least one daily goes to Piraeus (€42, 3¾ hours).

FERRY

A car ferry departs five times daily from Polonia for Kimolos at 9am, 11am, 2.15pm, 6.30pm and 10.40pm (per person €1.80, plus €1.50 for a moped, €3.20 for a motorbike and €8 for a car, 20 minutes).

From the main port of Adamas there are two ferries daily to Piraeus (€25, five to seven hours); Sifnos (€7, 1¼ hours, one daily), Serifos (€7.50,

two hours) and Kythnos (€11.50, 3½ hours); and six weekly to Kimolos (€4.50, one hour).

Three times weekly a ferry sails to the Cretan port of Sitia (€21.60, nine hours) and then on to Karpathos in the Dodecanese (€33.40, 15 hours) and Rhodes (€34, 21 hours).

There are three weekly ferries to Folegandros (€7.10, 2½ hours) and Sikinos (€10.90, three hours), and two weekly to Paros (€11.40, 4½ hours).

There is one weekly ferry to Santorini (€15.60, four hours), Ios (€13.70, 5½ hours) and Syros (€11.70, eight hours).

Getting Around

There are no buses to the airport (south of Papikinou), so you'll need to take a **taxi**

(☎ 22870 22219) for €7, plus €0.30 per piece of luggage, from Adamas. A taxi from Adamas to Plaka is €7; add €1 for evening trips.

Buses leave Adamas for Plaka and Trypiti every hour or so. Buses run to Pollonia (four daily), Paleohori (three daily), Provatas (three daily) and Arhivadolimni (Milos) Camping, east of Adamas (three daily). All fares are €1.20.

A helpful car hire is **Giourgas Rent a Car** (☎ 22870 22352, 6937757066; giourgas@otenet.gr), reached by heading east from the ferry quay, going inland from where the waterfront road crosses a dry river bed and then turning right just past Aeolis Hotel. Cars, motorcycles and mopeds can also be hired from places along the waterfront.

ADAMAS ΑΔΑΜΑΣ

pop 1391

Plaka is the capital of Milos and the most appealing of all the settlements, but the pleasant, lively port of Adamas has most of the accommodation, shops and general services, plus a diverting waterfront scene.

Orientation

For the town centre, turn right from the arrival quay. The central square, with the bus stop, taxi rank and outdoor cafés, is at the end of this stretch of waterfront, where the road curves inland. Just past the square is a road to the right that skirts the town beach.

Information

ATMs can be found outside Vichos Tours midway along the main harbourfront and in the main square. The post office is along the main road, 50m from the main square, on the right.

Municipal Tourist Office (☎ 22870 22445; www.milos-island.gr; ☎ 8am-midnight mid-Jun–mid-Sep) Opposite the quay; one of the most helpful offices in the Cyclades.

Terry's Travel Services (☎ 22870 22640; www.terrysmitostravel.com) Friendly, helpful service goes with a great love of the island here. Help with accommodation, car rental, kayaking and sailing trips, diving and much more. Head left from the ferry quay, and, just past the bend in the road, go right up a lane.

Police station (☎ 22870 21378) On the main square, next to the bus stop.

Port police (☎ 22870 22100) On the waterfront.

Sights & Activities

The **Milos Mining Museum** (☎ 22870 22481; www.milosminingmuseum.gr; admission free; ☎ 9am-2pm & 6-

9pm Jul–mid-Sep, 8am-2.30pm Tue-Sat mid-Sep–Jun) is a must for mining enthusiasts; in fact, it's a must for everyone. It's about 600m east of the ferry quay.

Dive courses are offered by **Milos Diving Center** (☎ 22870 41296; www.milosdiving.gr), based at Pollonia. It's a member of the International Association for Handicapped Divers.

Tours

Milos Round 1 & 2 (☎ 22870 23411; tours €25; ☎ May-Sep) Has four boats departing daily at 9am, stopping at beaches around the island and pausing at Kimolos for lunch. Return is at 6pm. Buy tickets on the waterfront.

Milos Yachting (☎ 22870 22079; ☎ May-Sep) Has sailing trips (per person €60) to the island's nicest beaches and coves; includes a seafood lunch, ouzo and sweets. Sailing tours (€240) take place in the southwest Cyclades. Book through travel agencies.

Festivals & Events

The **Milos Festival**, a well-orchestrated event, is held in early July and features traditional dancing, cooking and jazz.

Sleeping

In summer, lists of available domatia are given out at the tourist office on the quay, but decent accommodation is thin on the ground – make sure you call ahead.

Arhivadolimni (Milos) Camping (☎ 22870 31410; fax 22870 31412; www.miloscamping.gr; Arhiva-dolimni) camp sites per adult/child/tent €7/4/4, bungalows €50-116) This camping ground has excellent facilities, including a restaurant, bar and bike rental. It's 4.5km east of Adamas; to get here, follow the signs along the waterfront from the central square or take the bus (see Getting Around, p439).

Hotel Delfini (☎ 22870 22001; fax 22870 22294; s/d €45/65; ☎ Apr-Oct; ☎) A pleasant, long-standing place with good rooms and facilities. Neighbouring hotels have rather stolen the view, but there's a lovely terrace. It's to the west of the ferry quay and is tucked in behind the Lagada Beach Hotel.

Aeolis Hotel (☎ 22870 23985; www.aeolis-hotel.com; d €85) An immaculate hotel with relaxing décor and fine furnishings, the Aeolis is a short distance inland from where the waterfront road crosses a dry river bed. Rates drop substantially outside August.

Villa Helios (☎ 22870 22258; fax 22870 23974; heaton.theologitis@utanet.at; apt €90-100; ☎ mid-May–mid-Oct; ☎) In an unbeatable location, high above the

port, are these stylish, beautifully furnished apartments for two or four people.

Portiani Hotel (☎ 22870 22940; www.portianimilos.com; s/d incl buffet breakfast €120/150; ☎ ☎) The port's main waterfront hotel is right next to the square, but the fine rooms have a pleasant air of seclusion, and are worth the price, if you want all mod cons, including a lift for disabled access. The upper balconies have great views. The buffet breakfast features delicious local products.

Eating

Taverna Barko (☎ 22870 22660; dishes €2.30-9) A classic *mezedhopoleio*. On the road to Plaka, near the outskirts of town, Barko offers some real treats such as Milos cheese pie and octopus in wine. It also serves pasta.

I Milos (☎ 22870 22210; dishes €2.50-8) This likeable place is at the far end of the main square's line of waterfront cafés and tavernas. It offers breakfast (€4.10 to €6.20) and is great for coffee. Lunch dishes include pizzas and pastas. The sweet of tooth should try *loukoumadhes* – fried balls of dough flavoured with cinnamon and served with honey syrup.

Flisvos (☎ 22870 22275; dishes €4.50-7) Fish is by the kilogram at this busy waterfront taverna, to the east of the ferry quay. It serves good charcoal-grilled Greek specialities without fuss. Salads are crisp and fresh and the cheese and mushroom pies are delicious.

Entertainment

Halfway up the first staircase along from the ferry quay are a couple of popular music bars including Ilori and Vipera Lebetina, playing disco, pop and Greek music during July and August.

Akri (☎ 22870 22064) Further uphill, opposite Villa Helios, Akri is in a beautiful location with a fine terrace overlooking the port. Music favours ethnic, funk and easy listening. It's also open for breakfast (€5 to €8). Upstairs is an elegant gallery selling superb glass jewellery, paintings, pottery and sculpture, many by island artists.

PLAKA & TRYPITI ΠΛΑΚΑ & ΤΡΥΠΙΤΗ

Plaka, 5km uphill from Adamas, is a typical Cycladic town with white houses and labyrinthine lanes. It merges with the settlement of Trypiti to the south and rises above a sprawl

of converging settlements, yet has a distinctive and engaging character.

Plaka is built on the site of Ancient Milos, which was destroyed by the Athenians and rebuilt by the Romans.

Sights & Activities

The **archaeology museum** (☎ 22870 21629; admission €3; ☎ 8.30am-3pm Tue-Sun) is in Plaka, just downhill from the bus turnaround. It's in a handsome old building and contains some riveting exhibits, including a plaster cast of *Venus de Milo* that was made by Louvre craftsmen – as a sort of *Venus de Mea Culpa*, perhaps. Best of all is a perky little herd of tiny bull figurines from the Late Cycladic period.

The **Milos Folk & Arts Museum** (☎ 22870 21292; ☎ 10am-2pm & 6-9pm Tue-Sat, 10am-2pm Sun & Mon) has fascinating exhibits, including traditional costumes, woven goods and embroidery. It's signposted from the bus turnaround in Plaka.

At the bus turnaround, go east for the path that climbs to the **Frankish Kastro**, built on the ancient acropolis and offering panoramic views of most of the island. The 13th-century church, **Thalassitras**, is inside the walls.

There are some Roman ruins near Trypiti, including Greece's only Christian **catacombs** (☎ 22870 21625; admission free; ☎ 8am-7pm Tue-Sun). Stay on the bus towards Trypiti and get off at a T-junction by a big signpost indicating the way. Follow the road down for about 500m to where a track (signed) goes off to the right. This leads to the rather forlorn, but somehow thrilling, spot where a farmer found the *Venus de Milo* in 1820; you can't miss the huge sign. A short way further along the track is the well-preserved **ancient theatre**, which hosts the **Milos Festival** every July. Back on the surfaced road, head downhill to reach the 1st-century catacombs.

Sleeping & Eating

All of the following places are located in Plaka.

Betty's Rooms (☎ 22870 21538; d €70) Forget Santorini; these delightful rooms in a friendly family house are at the bottom end of Plaka and have fantastic views.

Archondoula Karamitsou Studios (☎ 22870 23820; www.archondoula-studios.gr; ste €130) More great views are enjoyed at these traditional rooms, which are full of local craftwork and island antiques. Prices drop substantially outside August.

our pick **Archondoula** (☎ 22870 21384; dishes €2.50-12) This cheerful, family-run *mezedhopoleio* is a delight. All the family is involved, and the food is classic traditional across a range of favourites from fresh salads to spicy grilled goat's cheese to shrimps with cream sauce. It's just along the main street from the bus turnaround in Plaka.

Utopia Café (☎ 22870 23678) One of best views in the Cyclades can be enjoyed from the cool terrace of Utopia. Head down the narrow alley opposite Archondoula and prepare to have your breath taken away. Mainly a café and drinks place, it's open until the early hours.

AROUND MILOS

The village of **Klima**, below Trypiti and the catacombs, was the port of ancient Milos. It's a picturesque fishing village with a lovely little harbour. Whitewashed buildings, with coloured doors and balconies, have boat-houses on the ground floor and living quarters above.

Plathiena is a fine sandy beach below Plaka, to the north. On the way to Plathiena you can visit the fishing villages of **Areiti** and **Fourkovouni**.

At **Sarakiniko** are snow-white rock formations and natural terraces. **Pollonia**, on the north coast, is a fishing village-cum-resort with a beach and domatia. The boat to Kimolos departs here.

The beaches of **Provatas** and **Paleohori**, on the south coast, are long and sandy, and Paleohori has hot springs.

KIMOLOS ΚΙΜΩΛΟΣ

pop 769

Perhaps because it is too often seen as an adjunct to its larger neighbour, Kimolos has hung on to a genuine otherworldliness. It lies just northeast of Milos and receives a steady trickle of visitors, especially day-trippers arriving from Pollonia. The boat docks at the port of **Psathi**, from where it's 1.5km to the pretty capital of **Hora**. The medieval *kastro*, embedded at the heart of Hora, is a joy. Albeit in ruins, there are surviving walls and restoration work is ongoing.

There's an ATM by the town hall in Hora.

Beaches can be reached by caique from Psathi. At the centre of the island is the

364m-high cliff on which sits the fortress of **Paleokastro**.

There are domatia, tavernas, cafés and bars enough in Hora and Psathi. Domatia owners meet ferries. Expect to pay single/double rates of about €35/50.

The taverna **To Kyma** (☎ 22870 51001; dishes €3.50-9), on the beach at Psathi, is fine for Greek-standard meals.

There is one petrol station on Kimolos; it's about 200 metres to the north of Psathi.

Getting There & Away

Boats go daily to and from Pollonia on Milos, departing from Kimolos at 8am, 10am, 1.15pm, 5.30pm and 10pm (see p439 for details on boats to Kimolos).

There are six boats weekly to and from Piraeus (€17.50, eight hours) via Sifnos (€6.50, 1½ hours), Serifos (€5.90, 3¼ hours) and Kythnos (€11, three hours).

There are four ferries weekly to Adamas (€4.90, one hour) and Syros (€11.70, five hours) and two weekly to Folegandros (€5.50, three hours) and Sikinos (€8.20, four hours).

Two weekly ferries go to Paros (€9.60, 4½ hours) and Santorini (€12.80, 3½ hours).

SIFNOS ΣΙΦΝΟΣ

pop 2900

Sifnos (*see-fnoss*) masks its many charms behind a curtain of high barren hills. Beyond all this, however, is an abundant landscape of terraced olive groves and almond trees, with oleanders in the valleys and juniper and aromatic herbs covering the hillsides. It is a sizable island and has a number of villages. Plenty of old paths link these villages and walking on Sifnos is particularly satisfying. The Anavasi map series *Topo 25/10.25 Aegean Cyclades/Sifnos* is useful for footpath details.

During the Archaic period the island was very wealthy because of its gold and silver resources, but by the 5th century BC the mines were exhausted and Sifnos' fortunes were reversed. The island has a tradition of pottery making, basket weaving and cooking.



Getting There & Away

FAST BOAT & CATAMARAN

In summer fast catamarans run daily except Wednesday between Serifos and Piraeus (€37.50, 2¼ hours), Milos (€12.50, 45 minutes), Folegandros (€16, 45 minutes), Santorini (€31, 1¼ hours), Serifos (€11.50, 20 minutes) and Syros (€21, 5¼ hours). Six weekly go to Paros (€10.50, five hours) and Naxos (€30, 4¼ hours) and one weekly heads to Kythnos (€12, 2¼ hours).

FERRY

There are daily ferries to Piraeus (€24, five hours) via Serifos (€6.50, one hour) and Kythnos (€8.50, 2½ hours). There are six ferries weekly to Milos (€7, two hours) and Kimolos (€6.50, 1½ hours), three ferries weekly to Folegandros (€4.30, four hours), Sikinos (€9.50, four hours) and Santorini (€12.50, eight hours), and four weekly to Paros (€4.20, two hours) and Syros (€8.20, five hours).

Getting Around

Frequent buses link the island's main town, Apollonia, with the following: Kamares

(€1.20), with some services continuing on to Artemonas (€1.20), Kastro (€1.20), Vathy (€1.70), Faros (€1.30) and Platys Gialos (€1.70).

Taxis (☎ 22840 31347) hover around the port and Apollonia's main square. Representative fares from Kamares are €6 to Apollonia, €8 to Platys Gialos and €9 to Vathy. Cars can be hired from **Stavros Hotel** (☎ 22840 31641) in Kamares, and from **Apollo Rent a Car** (☎ 22840 32237) in Apollonia, for €30 to €55.

KAMARES KAMAPEΣ

The port of Kamares (*kah-mah-rez*) has a cheerful holiday atmosphere, not least because of its large beach. There are lots of waterfront cafés and tavernas and a good mix of shops, from food stores to craft shops. The bus stop is by the tamarisk trees just past the inland end of the ferry quay.

Information

There are toilets near the tourist office, plus an ATM booth.

Municipal tourist office (☎ 22840 31977/31975; www.sifnos.gr; ☎ 9.30am-11pm Jul & Aug, 9.30am-2.30pm & 5-11pm Easter-Oct, 10am-11pm Sun-Tue & Thu, 11am-5pm Wed, 10am-10pm Fri & Sat Sep-Easter) Opposite the bus stop is this very helpful and well-organised office. Opening times may vary depending on boat arrivals. The office opens for boats that arrive late into the night. It sells ferry tickets and can find accommodation anywhere on the island. There's luggage storage (per item €1) and you can buy a useful clutch of information sheets about the island. There's also information on walking trips, bus schedules and ferry times.

Yamas Café Bar Internet (☎ 22840 31202; per hr €4; ☎ 8.30am-early hrs) Half way along the waterfront and up some steps. It also serves light snacks and breakfasts (€5 to €8).

Sleeping & Eating

Domatia owners rarely meet boats and in high season it's best to book ahead.

Camping Makis (☎ 22840 32366; www.makiscamp ing.gr; camp sites per adult/child/tent €6.50/3.50/4, r from €50; ☎ Apr-Nov; ♿ ♿) Well-run, relaxing and friendly, this pleasant camping ground is just behind the beach. It has an outdoor café, a barbecue area, minimarket, a laundry and shaded sites.

Simeon (☎ 22840 31652; studios_simeon@hotmail.com; s/d/apt €40/55/120; ☎ Apr-Oct) From their little balconies, the small front rooms here have stunning views down across the port and along the beach

to soaring mountains beyond. Other rooms are not so blessed, but are bigger. You get here by going up steepish steps from the waterfront.

Stavros Hotel (☎ 22840 31641/33383; www.sifnos-travel.com; s/d/tr €55/70/75; 🚻) Main street's Stavros has been refurbished in recent years. Rooms are comfy and bright and are a good size. Attached to the hotel is an information office that can arrange car hire and has a book exchange. The same family owns Hotel Kamari (☎ 22840 33383) on the outskirts of Kamares, on the road to Apollonia – rooms here are €40/50/55 per single/double/triple.

Hotel Afroditi (☎ 22840 31704; www.hotel-afroditi.gr; s/d/ind breakfast €65/80; 📞) The welcoming, family-run Afroditi is across the road from the beach. Rooms are a decent size and breakfast is a definite plus. There are sea views to the front and mountain views to the rear.

O Symos (☎ 22840 32353; dishes €2.50-8) Among a swath of waterfront tavernas, this popular place uses locally sourced ingredients in such appealing dishes as linguini and shrimps in saffron (€12) and a delicious *revithia* (chickpea) soup.

Another good eatery is the cheerful, family-run **Posidonia** (☎ 22840 32362; dishes €3-8), where you can get a full breakfast for €6.

APOLLONIA ΑΠΟΛΛΩΝΙΑ

The 'capital' of Sifnos is situated on the edge of a plateau 5km uphill from the port.

The stop for buses to and from Kamares is on Apollonia's busy central square, where the post office and Museum of Popular Art are located. Because of congestion, all other buses pick up passengers about 50m further on, at a T-junction where the road to the right goes to Vathy and Platys Gialos and the road to the left goes to Artemonas and Kastro. There is a big car park at the entrance to Apollonia. Constant traffic seems to be the norm, but step away from the main road onto the pedestrian thoroughfare behind the museum and Apollonia is transformed.

There is an Alpha Bank (with ATM), and the Piraeus Bank and National Bank of Greece (both with ATMs) are just round the corner from the Kamares stop on the road to Artemonas; the police station is another 50m beyond.

Internet Café 8 (☎ 22840 33734; per hour €4; 🕒 9am-1am) is about 150m along the road to Platys Gialos. **Bookshop** (☎ 22840 33523), just down from the bus stop, has newspapers and a good selection of books in various languages.

The quirky **Museum of Popular Art** (☎ 22840 31341; admission €1; 🕒 10am-2pm & 7.30-11.30pm Tue-Sun), on the central square and just opposite the post office, contains a splendid confusion of old costumes, pots, textiles and photographs that could keep you going for hours.

Sleeping & Eating

Mrs Dina Rooms (☎ 22840 31125, 6945513318; s/d/tr €40/55/65) There are flowers everywhere at this pleasant little complex of rooms, which are located a couple of hundred metres along the road south towards Vathy and Platys Gialos. The rooms are well above the road and have views towards Kastro.

Gerontios Rooms (☎ 22840 32316; s/d/tr €40/50/60) A fine choice, these flower-bedecked rooms are set high above the village centre with wide views to the village of Kastro. Head north towards Ano Petali from the centre of Apollonia.

Efthychia (☎ 22840 33274; d €55; 🚻) These pleasant, well-kept rooms are in a garden setting along the road towards Vathy and Platys Gialos.

Taverna Sifnos (☎ 22840 31624; dishes €3-9) Beside an attractive little square at the heart of Apollonia's pedestrianised main street, this family-run taverna has a good menu of well-prepared island dishes. There are rooms here also, with singles/doubles for €50/70.

Apostoli to Koutouki (☎ 22840 31186; dishes €5-9) Fish is sold by the kilogram at this long-established place on the main street. It also serves meat and chicken specialities.

AROUND SIFNOS

Not to be missed is the walled cliff-top village of **Kastro**, 3km from Apollonia. The former capital, it is a magical place of buttressed alleyways and whitewashed houses. It has a small **archaeological museum** (☎ 22840 31022; admission free; 🕒 8.30am-3pm Tue-Sun).

Buses go to Kastro from Apollonia but you can walk there, mainly on old paved pathways. The start of the path is 20m to the right (Vathy road) from the T-junction in Apollonia. A pleasant path circumnavigates Kastro and is especially scenic on its northern side – midway round the northern side, above the glittering sea, is the wonderful little art workshop of **Maximos (Panagiotis Fanariotis)** (☎ 22840 33692), whose speciality is handmade jewellery in original gold and silver motifs. Prices for

(Continued on page 453)

(Continued from page 444)

these lovely pieces start at about €6 and are far below the usual price charged for work of this high quality. There is also accommodation here (see Sleeping & Eating, below).

Platys Gialos, 6km south of Apollonia, has a big, generous beach, entirely backed by tavernas, domatia and shops. The bus terminates at the beach's southwestern end. **Vathy**, on the west coast, is an easy-going little village within the curved horns of an almost circular bay. **Faros** is a cosy little fishing hamlet with a couple of nice beaches nearby, such as the little beach of **Fasolou**, reached up steps and over the headland from the bus stop.

Sleeping & Eating

KASTRO

Maximos (☎ 22840 33692; r €50) A tiny terrace with unbeatable sea views comes with this quirky little room beside Maximos' workshop (see p444), located on the northern side of Kastro.

Rafeletou Apartments (☎ 22840 31161, 69324 74001; d €60-77, tr €70-90, apt €105-120) For an authentic Kastro experience, these family-run apartments at the heart of the village are delightful.

our pick **To Astro** (☎ 22840 31476; mains €5-9; 🕒 mid-Apr-Oct) Kastro's genuine 'star', as the name translates, certainly lives up to its name. Lovingly run by the owner-cook, it offers delicious island dishes including eggplant and meatballs, octopus with olives, and lamb in traditional Sifniot style.

PLATYS GIALOS ΠΛΑΤΥΣ ΓΙΑΛΟΣ

Although there are plenty of sleeping places here, most cater for package tourists.

Camping Platys Gialos (☎ 22840 71286; camp sites per adult/child/tent €6/4/4) Located about 500m from the beach, this is a reasonable camping ground in an olive grove.

Platys Gialos Hotel (☎ 22840 71324; fax 22840 71325; s/d €150/170; 📞) This peaceful hotel overlooks the south end of the beach. It has lovely terraces and a garden area, and rooms have imaginative, old-fashioned fittings. There's a loyal clientele, so it's wise to book well in advance.

Angeliki Rooms (☎ 22840 71288; d/tr €48/57) A beachfront venue with pleasant rooms, near the quieter south end of the beach and just back from the bus terminus.

To Koutouki (☎ 22840 71330; dishes €5-9) Right on the beach and run by the family that has the same-name place in Apollonia (p444), there are excellent fish dishes to be had here. Fish is by the kilogram but there's a reasonably priced choice.

VATHY ΒΑΘΥ

There are several sleeping options here, for ordinary mortals and for the mega-rich.

Areti Studios (☎ 22840 71191; d/apt €55/85; 📞) Lies a short distance back from the beach within its own lovely gardens. Rooms are clean and bright and the welcome is friendly. If you are driving, the approach is down a rough and at times very narrow track that goes off left just before the main road ends. Grit your teeth.

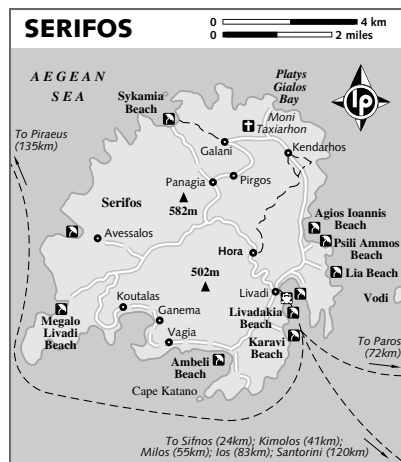
Elies Resort (☎ 22840 34000; www.eliesresorts.com; d €300-360, apt €480-950; 🕒 May-Oct; 📞) Inconspicuous, ultraprivate tourism, if you have the cash, is the story at this lush, luxury resort hotel. The huge complex, with gorgeous pool and gourmet restaurant, is subtly merged into the hillside above Vathy Bay and spills down to a beach. Rooms are sumptuous; suites and apartments are virtually houses, with the most expensive having their own terrace pool. All this and a champagne breakfast thrown in.

Vathy has a good choice of beachfront tavernas, such as Oceanida and Manolis, offering reliable Greek dishes.

SERIFOS ΣΕΡΙΦΟΣ

pop 1414

The traditional *hora* of Serifos (*seh-ri-fohs*) is a dramatic scribble of white houses that crowns a high and rocky peak, 2km to the north of the port of Livadi. It catches your eye the minute the ferry docks and transforms an otherwise everyday scene. Serifos is generally barren and rocky, but has a few pockets of greenery that are the result of tomato and vine cultivation. There are some pleasant paths linking various villages; the Anavasi map series *Topo 25/10.26 Aegean Cyclades/Serifos* is useful. Serifos is known for its windy mountain ridges, and there are plans afoot for a mega wind farm (see boxed text, p455) – however, there's fierce opposition from many.



Getting There & Away

FAST BOAT & CATAMARAN

In summer fast catamarans run daily except Wednesday between Serifos and Piraeus (€31.50, 2¼ hours), Sifnos (€11.50, 25 minutes), Milos (€14, 1¼ hours) and Folegandros (€20.50, 1½ hours).

FERRY

There is a daily ferry to Piraeus (€16, 4½ hours) and Sifnos (€6.50, one hour), and six ferries weekly to Milos (€7.50, two hours) and Kimolos (€8.50, 2½ hours).

Four times weekly a ferry goes to Kythnos (€8, 1½ hours), and twice weekly boats go to Paros (€7.60, three hours), Syros (€7.50, two to four hours) and Folegandros (€10.30, 5¼ hours).

There are weekly boats to Santorini (€16.20, seven hours), Ios (€12.20, six hours) and Sikinos (€11.60, five hours).

Getting Around

There are frequent buses between Livadi and Hora (€1.20, 15 minutes); a timetable is posted at the bus stop by the yacht quay. Vehicles can be hired from Krinas Travel in Livadi.

LIVADI ΛΙΒΑΔΙ

pop 537

The port town of Serifos is a fairly low-key place where, in spite of growing popularity, there's still a reassuring feeling that the modern world has not entirely taken over.

Just over the headland that rises from the ferry quay lies the fine, tamarisk-fringed beach at **Livadakia**. A walk further south over the next headland, **Karavi Beach** is the unofficial clothes-optional beach.

Information

There is an Alpha Bank (with ATM) on the waterfront and an ATM under the bakery sign opposite the yacht quay. There was once an official tourist information office that opened mid-July to August on the waterfront, but opening has been uncertain in recent years.

The post office is midway along the road that runs inland from opposite the bus stop and then bends sharply right.

Krinas Travel (☎ 22810 51488; sertrav@otenet.gr) Just where the ferry quay joins the waterfront road, this helpful agency sells ferry tickets and organises car (per day €45) and scooter (per day €19) hire. It also has internet access at €2 per half-hour.

Port police (☎ 22810 51470) Up steps just beside Krinas Travel.

Sleeping & Eating

Coralli Camping (☎ 22810 51500; fax 22810 51073; www.coralli.gr; camp sites per adult/child/tent €7/3/6, bungalows s/d €30/55; P) This well-equipped camping ground, shaded by tall eucalypts, is just a step away from sandy Livadakia Beach. Bungalows have mountain or sea views. There's also a restaurant and a minimarket, and internet access for €2 per half-hour. A minibus meets all ferries.

Hotel Areti (☎ 22810 51479; fax 22810 51547; s/d/tr €50/65/75) With a great location on a hill above the ferry quay, and well-kept rooms with attractive décor, this is one of the better places in Serifos. There are also apartments nearby.

Alexandros-Vassilia (☎ 22810 51119; fax 22810 51903; s/d €50/70) Located right behind the beachfront of Livadakia. It's a complex of rooms in a rose-fragrant garden setting and is fronted by a taverna. Rooms and studios are a good size and are clean and well equipped (studios have cooking facilities). The taverna does sturdy Greek staples for €4.50 to €9.

Yacht Club Serifos (☎ 22810 51888; breakfast €2.50-11, snacks & sandwiches €2.80-€6; ☎ 7am-3am) There's a terrific ambience at this waterfront café-bar. Music ranges from lounge by day to mainstream, rock, disco and funk late into the night.

Passaggio (☎ 22810 52212; mains €5.50-16) Opened in recent years, this stylish waterfront restaurant brings some international touches to traditional cuisine. Starters such as cod dumplings are delicious, and other treats include steamed mussels or chicken pie with feta.

Also recommended for reliable Greek standards (both on the waterfront): **Stamatis** (☎ 22810 51309; mains €3.50-7) **Taverna Takis** (☎ 22810 51159; mains €5-11.50)

Entertainment

Metalleio (☎ 22810 51755; ☎ 9pm-early hrs) Tucked away on the road beyond the waterfront, Metalleio doubles as a decent restaurant and a very cool music venue featuring an eclectic array of sounds from around the world, including jazz, funk, Afro, Asian groove and Latin. The restaurant offers mainly poultry and meat dishes (mains €6 to €13.50).

There are a couple of fairly loud music bars on the central waterfront such as the Malabar Café and, in the same complex, the Captain Hook Club. The Yacht Club Serifos is one of the coolest venues.

HORA ΧΩΡΑ

The *hora* of Serifos spills across the summit of a rocky hill above Livadi and is one of the most striking of the Cycladic capitals. Ancient steps lead up from Livadi, though they are fragmented by the snaking road that links the two. You can walk up, but in the heat of summer, going up by bus is wiser. Just up from the bus terminus, steps climb into the wonderful maze of Hora proper, and lead to the charming main square, watched over by the imposing neoclassical town hall. From the square, narrow alleys and more steps lead ever upwards to the remnants of the ruined 15th-century **Venetian Kastro**. Low walls enclose the highest part of the kastro, from where the views are spectacular. A small church occupies part of the summit.

Back downhill, there's a post office just up from the bus turnaround.

Hora has a small **archaeological museum** (☎ 22810 51138; admission free; ☎ 8.30am-3pm Tue-Sun) displaying fragments of mainly Hellenic and Roman sculpture excavated from the *kastro*. Exhibits are sparse and the museum tiny, but it is a pleasure to visit. Panels in Greek and English spell out fascinating details, including the legend of Perseus.

WIND & WATER: THE BIG GREEN ISSUES

The Cyclades have plenty of wind and water, and these two elements are at the forefront of current controversies among islanders. The big green issues in the Cyclades are projects such as the mega wind farm planned for Serifos where, at the time of writing, islanders were opposing a plan to site scores of wind generators along the windy crest of the island's mountainous interior. While acknowledging the 'green' credentials of wind power, many who love Serifos believe the number and size of the planned windmills makes for an intrusion too far, especially since most of the power generated would go to the mainland.

On several of the islands, yacht marinas are currently under construction, and these are projects that are seen as positive tourism ventures. But not all port extensions have been welcomed. In 2007 Naxos was gripped by controversy over plans that would have extended the port area substantially. A courageous handful of islanders believed that the plan was overwhelming in every way – in terms of its size and of its potential negative impact on the port's tourism appeal and general lifestyle. They took their case to the Council of State, Greece's highest administrative court, which ruled against the plan on the grounds that it was illegal. The matter caused sometimes bitter division on the island, and the future of the development remains unclear.

These are ground level 'green' issues that are capable of serious impact on the larger life of the Cyclades. They take the sheen off our often-rosy view of island life. They also resonate with many similar issues of our own countries. As visitors we can make a contribution to these debates by at least being aware of them, and perhaps by simply talking about them a general awareness may develop in Greece.

Meanwhile, on the remote island of Sikinos, locals are setting up imaginative ventures aimed at primary production such as livestock breeding, beekeeping and vine growing, and are staying with small-scale, sustainable tourism.

There is a pleasant walk on a fine cobbled pathway that starts just above the archaeological museum and leads up the mountain to the little church of **Agios Georgios**. The views are superb.

Sleeping & Eating

I Panemia (☎ 2281051717, 6942699762; s/d €30/35) You won't get better value than at this family-run place, where the decent, well-equipped rooms have front balcony views down towards the distant sea and side views up towards Hora.

our pick Stou Stratou (☎ 2281052566; plates €4-18) The tradition of the *mezedhopoleio* is alive and well at this bar-café in the pretty main square. There are tasty mezedhes (€3 to €4.50) and choices such as a vegetarian plate or a mixed plate of Cretan smoked pork, ham, cheese, salami, stuffed vine leaves, feta, potato, tomatoes and egg, which will keep two people more than happy. Also available are breakfasts, ice creams, delicious sweets and cocktails. The stylish menu (more of a booklet) provides added pleasure – it features the work of famous artists as well as excerpts from a number of writers.

Karavomylos (☎ 2281051261; dishes €4.50-14) has a pleasant terrace. Delicious mezedhes and local dishes are a speciality and it serves an excellent choice of breakfasts (€3 to €9). There's music in the bar and occasional live sessions of Greek traditional music, including *rembetika*.

AROUND SERIFOS

About 1½ kilometres north of Livadi along a surfaced road is **Psili Ammos Beach**. A path from Hora heads north for about 4km to the pretty village of **Kendarhos** (also called Kallitios), from where you can continue by a very windy road for another 3km to the 17th-century fortified **Moni Taxiarchon**, which has impressive 18th-century frescoes. The walk from the town to the monastery takes about two hours. You will need to take food and water, as there are no facilities in Kendarhos.

KYTHNOS ΚΥΘΝΟΣ

pop 1700

Kythnos is more of a weekend destination for mainlanders and glossy motor cruisers. The island doesn't attract too many foreign visitors. Yet this is a Greek island of some char-

acter, and once you escape the rather dowdy port of Merihas, the island rewards, not least in its pleasantly relaxed way of life.

The main settlements are Merihas, the capital Hora and the very traditional village of Dryopida.

There's an Emboriki bank (with ATM) on the road above the Merihas waterfront, and an ATM just past the flight of steps as you come from the ferry quay. **Antonios Larentzakis Travel Agency** (☎ 2281032104/32291) sells ferry tickets, can arrange accommodation and rents out cars and motorbikes. It's up the flight of steps near Ostria Taverna that leads to the main road. Hora has the island's post office and **police station** (☎ 2281031201). The **port police** (☎ 2281032290) are on the waterfront in Merihas.

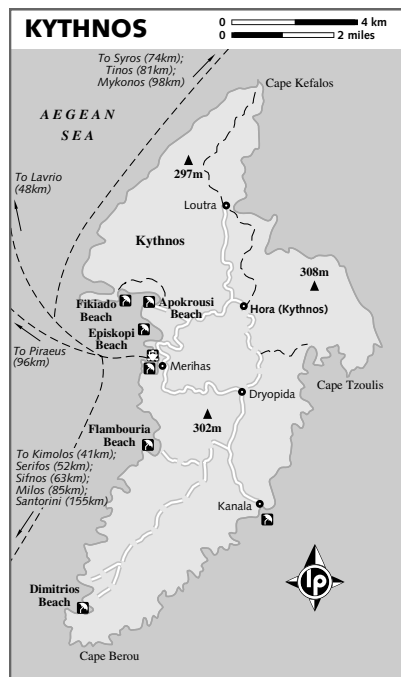
Getting There & Away

FAST BOAT & CATAMARAN

There is one boat weekly to Piraeus (€27, 1½ hours) and Sifnos (€12, 2¼ hours).

FERRY

There are at least two ferries to Piraeus daily (€12.50, 2½ hours). Most services coming



from Piraeus continue to Serifos (€8, 1½ hours), Sifnos (€8.50, 2½ hours), Kimolos (€11, three hours) and Milos (€11.50, 3½ hours).

There are six weekly ferries to Lavrio (€8.20, 3½ hours), three weekly to Syros (€7.90, two hours) and two weekly to Kea (€5.90, 1¼ hours), Folegandros (€14.50, six hours), Sikinos (€15.20, seven hours) and Santorini (€19.70, eight hours).

A ferry runs once weekly to Andros (€11.70, five hours).

Getting Around

There are regular buses in high summer from Merihas to Dryopida (€1.20), continuing to Kanala (€2.20) or Hora (€1.30). Less-regular services run to Loutra (€2.20). The buses supposedly meet the ferries, but usually they leave from the turn-off to Hora in Merihas. Outside school holidays the only buses tend to be school buses.

Taxis (☎ 6944743791) are a better bet, except at siesta time. It's €12 to Hora and €7 to Dryopida. There are, however, only a few taxis on the island.

MERIHAS ΜΕΡΙΧΑΣ

pop 289

Merihas (*meh-ree-hass*) does not have a lot going for it other than a bit of waterfront life and a slightly grubby beach. But Merihas is a reasonable base and has most of the island's accommodation options. There are better beaches within walking distance north of the quay (turn left facing inland) at **Episkopi** and **Apokrousi**.

Sleeping & Eating

Domatia owners usually meet boats and there are a number of signs along the waterfront advertising rooms; alternatively enquire at Larentzakis Travel Agency (opposite). A lot of places block-book during the high season and there is some reluctance towards one-night stopovers. You should definitely book ahead for July and August.

Anna Gouma Rooms (☎ 2281032105, 6949777884; s/d €40/50) These pleasant, good-sized rooms are right across the bay from the ferry quay, and are away from the hubbub.

Giannoulis Rooms (☎ 2281032247; fax 2281032092; d/tr €40/50) There are useful enough small rooms here, although they are rather faded. They're above the O Merihas café. It's es-

sential to book ahead here in high season and at weekends.

O Merihas (☎ 2281032247, under €6 for coffee and cakes) A great local *zaharoplasteio* (patisserie) on the ground floor of Giannoulis Rooms, dishing up coffee, drinks, snacks and cakes.

Taverna to Kandouni (☎ 2281032220; dishes €5-12) Near the port police on the waterfront, Kandouni is a popular family-run taverna specialising in fish dishes and grilled meats.

Ostria (☎ 2281032263; dishes €6-13) On the waterfront near the quay, Ostria has reasonable Greek fare. Seafood is by the kilo.

AROUND KYTHNOS

The capital, **Hora** (also known as Kythnos or Messaria), is steadily taking on a distinctive charm, underpinned by its inherent Greek character. Small, colourful cafés and shops are growing in number. The long straggling main street makes for a pleasant stroll. The post office and police are at the entrance to town coming from Merihas.

The resort of **Loutra** is 3km north of Hora on a windy bay and hangs on to its status through its surviving thermal baths.

From Hora there's a pleasant 5km walk south to **Dryopida**, a picturesque town of red-tiled roofs and winding streets clustered steeply on either side of a ravine. It's home to a remarkable cave called Kataphyki that extends for 600m. Much work has been carried out to make the cave accessible, but things seem to have stalled at the time of writing. You're best to cover the 5km back by road to Merihas by bus or taxi.

There are good beaches at **Flambouria** about 2.5km south of Merihas, and near **Kanala** on the southeast coast.

Sleeping & Eating

There are plenty of rooms and apartments in Loutra although they tend to be block-booked for stays of more than two days. In Dryopida some private houses let rooms in summer. Ask at shops and tavernas.

Filoxenia (☎ 2281031644; www.filoxenia-kythnos.gr; d/tr/q €65/75/90; P ♻) In Hora, these delightful, family-run studios are just at the entrance to the main village and overlook a garden. Rooms are immaculate and well appointed and there's a charming welcome.

There are several decent tavernas in Hora including Koursaros, To Steki and Mezzeria.

KEA KEA (TZIA)

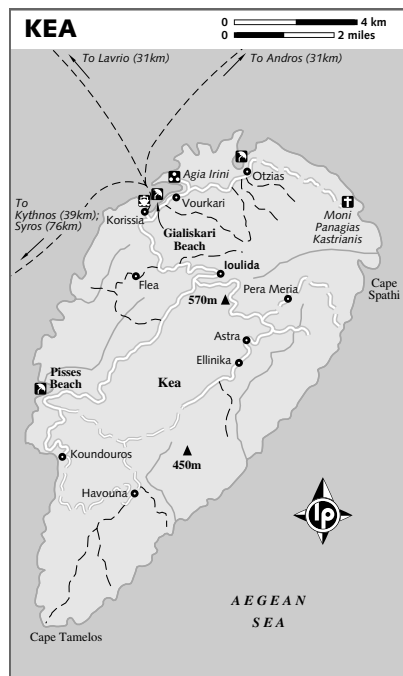
pop 2417

Kea is the most northerly island of the Cyclades and the island closest to Attica, and attracts more mainland locals than foreign visitors. It is an island that wears its many charms quietly and, between its bare hills, green valleys are filled with orchards, olive groves and almond and oak trees. The main settlements on the island are the port of Korissia, and the attractive capital, Ioulida, about 5km inland. There are several fine beaches and some excellent signposted footpaths. Local people use the name Tzia for their island.

Getting There & Away

Boats are usually packed on Fridays and you should avoid the Sunday night ferry to Lavrio, unless you enjoy controlled rioting. If you plan a Sunday departure, make sure you get your ticket before Friday – and have some rugby-playing experience.

Services connect Kea with Lavrio (€5.90, 1¼ hours) on the mainland at least twice daily



and as often as six times daily in summer. Three weekly ferries go to Kythnos (€5.90, 1¼ hours) and on to Syros (€9.40, four hours). One weekly boat goes to Tinos (€10.30, five hours) and Andros (€8, six hours). A slow ferry runs each Friday from Kea to Milos (€11.70, 15½ hours), Kimolos (€11.70, 14½ hours), Folegandros (€17.70, 13 hours), Sikinos (€19.20, 12 hours), Ios (€18.70, 11¼ hours), Naxos (€14.40, 9 hours) and Paros (€14.40, 8 hours).

Getting Around

In July and August there are, in theory, regular buses from Korissia to Vourkari, Otzias, Ioulida and Pisses although there may be irregularities in the schedules. A taxi (☎ 22880 21021/228) may be a better bet, to Ioulida (€6) especially. Motorcycle and car rental is well above the usual high-season prices on other islands. Expect to pay, per day, anything from €25 for a scooter and from €50 for a car.

KORISSIA ΚΟΡΗΣΣΙΑ

pop 555

The port of Korissia (koh-ree-see-ah) is a fairly bland place, but there are enough tavernas and cafés to pass the time. The north-facing port beach tends to catch the wind.

Information

There is an ATM next door to the Art Café and also near Hotel Karthea. The Piraeus Bank (with ATM) is behind the beach. There is a small ferry ticket office next to the car-rental agency on the waterfront.

Art Café (☎ 22880 21181; internet access per 30min €3.50; ☎ 8.30am-midnight) On the waterfront.

Tourist information office (☎ 22880 21500) The official tourist office, opposite the ferry quay, has lists of domatia in Greek, but not much more.

Sleeping & Eating

Domatia owners don't meet ferries. It's wise to book in high season and at weekends.

Hotel Tzia (☎ 22880 21305; fax 22880 21140; s/d/tr €50/57/60; ☎) This is a functional beachfront building and is owned by the municipality of Kea; rooms are adequate and clean and it's a straight leap into the sea from the front.

Hotel Karthea (☎ 22880 21204; fax 22880 21417; s/d/tr €55/65/80) Architectural brutalism from a lost age defines the Karthea. And it's convenient for the port. Rooms are clean and comfortable and those at the rear overlook a quiet gar-

den area. There's no lift to the several floors. In 1974, the deposed colonels of the Greek junta were said to have been imprisoned in the newly opened hotel for a short time.

Hotel Brillante Zoi (☎ 22880 22685; www.hotelbrillante.gr; s/d incl breakfast €95/110, apt incl breakfast €135-160; ☎ ☎) Individual décor in each room adds to the pleasant ambience of this boutique hotel. It has a charming garden setting and is midway along the beach road, about 300m from the ferry quay. The hotel is only robbed of sea views by the presence of Hotel Tzia, opposite.

There are several tavernas along the waterfront, all dishing up fairly standard fare for about €3.50 to €9, with **Akri** (☎ 22880 21196) being one of the best. The **Art Café** (☎ 22880 21181) has a pleasant ambience and is great for people-watching.

Kea has more supermarkets than most islands. On Friday nights they get very busy as the weekend influx stocks up.

IOULIDA ΙΟΥΛΙΔΑ

pop 700

Ioulida (ee-oo-lee-tha) is Kea's gem and has a distinctly metro feel at weekends. It's a delightful scramble of narrow alleyways and rising lanes that lies along the rim of a natural amphitheatre among the hills. It was once a substantial settlement of ancient Greece, but few relics remain and even the **Venetian kastro** has been incorporated into private houses. The houses have red-tiled roofs like those of Dryopida (p457) on Kythnos.

The bus turnaround is on a square just at the edge of town. From the turnaround, an archway leads into the village. Turning right and uphill takes you into the more interesting heart of Ioulida proper. The post office is part-way up on the right.

Sights

Ioulida's **archaeological museum** (☎ 22880 22079; admission free; ☎ 8.30am-3pm Tue-Sun) is just before

the post office on the main thoroughfare. It houses some intriguing artefacts, mostly from Agia Irini (below).

The famed **Kea Lion**, chiselled from slate in the 6th century BC, lies on the hillside beyond the last of the houses. Head uphill from the museum and keep going until abreast of the Kea Lion across a shallow valley. The path then curves round past a cemetery and the Lion, with its Mona Lisa smile, is ahead.

Sleeping & Eating

There are a few domatia in Ioulida, and several decent tavernas. Ask about rooms at tavernas.

Recommended eateries with good Greek dishes from about €4.50 to €10 (with lamb and fresh fish costing more):

Estiatorio I Piatsa (☎ 22880 22195) Just inside the archway.

Kalofagadon (☎ 22880 22118) On the main square.

AROUND KEA

The beach road from Korissia leads past **Gialiskari Beach** for 2.5km to where the waterfront quay at tiny **Vourkari** is lined with yachts and cafés. **Vourkariana Art Gallery** (☎ 22880 21458) is set back midwaterfront among the cafés and restaurants; it stages changing exhibitions of world-class art works over the summer.

Just across the bay from Vourkari are the truncated remains of the Minoan site of **Agia Irini**. Excavations during the 20th century indicated that there had been a settlement here since 3200BC and that it functioned for over 2000 years.

The road continues for another 3km to a fine sandy beach at **Otzias**. A dirt road continues beyond here for another 5km to the 18th-century **Moni Panagias Kastrianis** (☎ 22880 24348), which has terrific views.

Pisses is the island's best beach and is 8km southwest of Ioulida. It is long and sandy, and backed by a verdant valley of orchards and olive groves, with rugged hills rising above.

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